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Education, Cultural Difference and Social Mobility in Multiethnic Northwest China

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Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to explore the forms of cultural exclusion experienced by ethnic minorities in the Chinese education system and to consider what might improve the inclusion of them. It is achieved primarily through examining the relationship between ethnicity and educational performance for Tibetan and Muslim ethnic groups in comparison with the mainstream Han group. The research is oriented by a cultural-ecological framework, by the theses of cultural capital and social capital, and by the theory of multiculturalism. The study makes a contribution to the limited research focusing on ethnic minorities in China, particularly from a sociological perspective.

The main findings relate to minorities' interpretations of and responses to the social system. In attempting to achieve social mobility through education, minorities have found that they are driven to desperation, or become resistant to or disengage from the social system, despite the fact that the state encourages them in economic prosperity and entitles them to equal political membership. It is argued that the desire, on the part of minorities to achieve social mobility through education is undermined by the mainstream agenda of integrating them into the Han nation state at the expense of their cultures.

The main analytical tool of this study is the framework of 'discursive repertoires'. This is used to analyse data arising from an historical investigation of Chinese culturalism, of current educational policy and public discourses on minority education, and from ethnographic fieldwork. Data from these three sources are triangulated to give an overall view of the experiences of ethnic minorities in educational terms.

Fieldwork was conducted in the first half of 2003 on the Qinghai-Gansu borderlands, a communication hub between Buddhism, Islam and Chinese atheism and Confucianism, northwest China. It was comprised of observation, questionnaires and interviews with school people (students and teachers) and outside people (community leaders and parents) from a wide range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

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Final thanks go to my reading, thinking and writing, which have brought me so much calm and joy that sustain my courage.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction 1
Introduction 1
Educational achievement and social mobility 2
The politics of multiculturalism 8
About this research 12
Outline of the chapters 18
Terminology 19

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework 21
Introduction 21
Three theoretical approaches 21
Cultural-ecological theory 21
The concept of cultural capital 29
The concept of social capital 32
Capital, culture and power relations 36
Conclusion 41

Chapter Three: Research Approach and Fieldwork 46
Introduction 46
An interactive and comparative approach 47
Interactive perspective 47
Comparative perspective 49
Fieldwork 53
Access and observations 53
Questionnaires 58
Interviews 59
Reflection on fieldwork 61

Chapter Four: Chinese Culturalism and Its Educational Legacy: An Historical Investigation 67
Introduction 67
The fluidity of ethnic boundaries of China 69
Culture as the primary criterion in distinguishing ethnic groups in China 72
Culturalism under nationalistic sentiment in modern China 77
New developments in culturalism 82
The educational legacy of imperial China: civil service examinations 85
The *wenhua* (culture) discourse of China 89
The current ethos in education 94

Chapter Five: The Education of Ethnic Minorities: Policy, Practice and Discourse 99
Introduction 99
Ethnic minorities of China 100
The educational level of ethnic minorities 102
Ethnic groups 104
Province-level territories 106
Current policies and practices of the education of ethnic minorities 107

The concerns and objectives shaping minority education policies and practices 110
The present concerns and objectives 110
The trajectories of state policies of bilingual education and the religious issue in education 115
The mainstream discourse of minority education 118
The integrative approach 122
The multicultural approach 125
Evaluation 129

Chapter Six: Between 'Ordinary' and Minority: The Tibetan Case 136
Introduction 136
Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture: an overview 137
Opportunities for social mobility 140
Education as the means to upward mobility 142
Two schools: an 'ordinary' school and a 'minority' school 144
The Huangnan Secondary School 144
The Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School 148
The parental dilemma: where to send children? 150
Justification for opting for minority schools 150
Justification for opting for ordinary schools 152
Where do students want to study? 154
Evaluations of the students in the Huangnan Secondary School 154
Evaluations of the students in the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School 156
To be 'ordinary' or minority: the cultural dilemma 157
Tibetan internalisation of the dominant critique of Tibetan culture and people 157
Discrimination against Tibetans 160
The dilemma facing the Tibetans emulating the Han model 161
The dilemma facing the Tibetans opting for minority schools 161
Conclusion 164

Chapter Seven: The Social Disengagement of 'Familiar Strangers': The Muslim Case 168
Introduction 168
State education for Muslims 169
The educational level of Muslims 173
One Muslim community and three Tibetan villages 173
The parents of the students in the mainstream school and the Tibetan minority school 174
The school performance of Muslim students 175
Pessimistic views of Muslim parents: a key force 177
An overview of Muslims and their school education 177
Barriers from the larger society 179
Barriers from the school 184
A call for Muslim minority school(s) 186
Students' struggle between different 'cultures' 189
Factors from outside the school 190

Factors from inside the school 192
Low perceptions of Muslim students 192
Cultural customs and the curriculum 194
The relationship between Muslim and other students 196
The influence of modern cultural values 198
Conclusion 200

Chapter Eight: The Mainstream Discursive Repertoires of Muslims and Tibetans 203
Introduction 203
Minority school performance and community forces 205
School performance 205
The system 206
Community forces 208
The status of minorities and their cultures in schools 214
Minority cultures and the curriculum 214
School policy on minority cultural practice 216
Relationships between the mainstream group and minority students 218
The mainstream discursive repertoires about minority peoples and cultures 221
The mainstream group's appeal for minority cultures 221
Dispensable minority cultures 223
Discursive repertoires about Muslims 224
Discursive repertoires about Tibetans 226
Conclusion 230

Chapter Nine: Conclusion 234
The social system 234
Community forces and their consequences 237
Economic development, political cohesion and cultural difference 240
The new cultural landscape in the domestic and international climate 242
Future research agenda 245
Reflection on this research 246

Bibliography 248

Appendices 271
Appendix 1 – Table 1 271
Appendix 2 – Table 2 273
Appendix 3 – Tables 3-5 274
Appendix 4 – Tables 6 & 7 275
Appendix 5 – Tables 8 & 9 276
Appendix 6 – Chinese *pinyin* 277
Appendix 7 – Map of China 278
Appendix 8 – Map of the Ethnic Composition on the Gansu-Qinghai Borderlands 279

Appendix 9 – Maps of the Beginnings of Ancient China 1900-1300 B.C. 280
Appendix 10 – Map of Ethnolinguistic Groups in China 281
Appendix 11 – Map of the New West 282
Appendix 12 – Table of History Timeline 283
Appendix 13 – (1) The Questionnaire for the Mainstream School 286
(2) The Questionnaire for the Minority School 288
Appendix 14 – (1) Interview Questions for Han, Muslim and Tibetan Students 290
(2) Interview Questions for Teachers 292
Appendix 15 – Glossary 293

Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

Why do some ethnic communities persistently perform poorly in schooling whereas some others perform better? Why is it that a number of minority members cannot achieve social mobility as much as they should in accordance with their achievement in education? This research aims to explore what hides behind the failure of ethnic minorities in the educational system and in related social mobility that are primarily shaped by the larger society. It is achieved through an examination of the relationship between ethnicity and educational performance in the first instance. On this basis it argues that the failure in inclusion of ethnic minorities of distinctive cultures is largely responsible for the poor minority performance in the larger society, and relatedly, in schools. This introductory chapter first examines the issue of educational achievement and ethnicity that aims to highlight the important role that social mobility plays in minority school performance. The specific attention paid to the concept of social mobility reflects my understanding of it, which in turn guides my arguments throughout the thesis. Social mobility is far more than economic achievement as it has long been understood or defined. Rather, it should also be understood in terms of recognition or social citizenship which 'is as real as economic status and is perhaps even more foundational' (Loury, Modood & Teles 2005:2). In other words, a (broadly understood) social dimension – and particularly a cultural dimension within it in the ethnic minority case of distinctive cultures – is in essential need of being incorporated in discussions of social mobility. Therefore the focus is sequentially turned to multiculturalism, a new social paradigm that emerged from the critical scrutiny of the marginalisation or exclusion of minority cultures by the wider society, which has largely caused the failure of ethnic minorities in the educational and social systems. On the basis of these discussions, I present the rationale and research aims of this study.

Educational achievement and social mobility

Standardised public education is widely acknowledged as essential for citizens to gain equal opportunity to access mainstream institutions (usually operating in the dominant language) (Kymlicka 2001:20), so as to achieve upward social mobility. This idea of equality makes demands in the first place for the equal achievement of students from different backgrounds in education. However, educational achievement is often unequal for some social or cultural groups as the UK and the USA literature shows.[1] One of the major forms of unequal school performance is closely associated with differences in ethnicity in that some ethnic groups tend to outperform others. For example, while some ethnic minority groups tend to outperform the ethnic majority group (e.g. Indians and Chinese in the UK and Chinese, Koreans and Indians in the USA), some other minority groups persistently perform poorly (e.g. African-Caribbean in the UK and African Americans and Mexicans in the USA).[2] The achievement gap between different ethnic minorities against the ethnic majority has motivated academics to carry out comparative studies to discover remedies for lower educational performers.

Kao and Thompson (2003) suggest that three theoretical approaches pervade debates on minority school performance, namely, cultural orientations of certain ethnic groups that promote or discourage academic achievement; the structural position of ethnic groups that affects the environments of children, parents or schools; and genetic differences. The last approach is largely dismissed in academic discussions today for its racist overtone and the lack of empirical evidence (ibid.:419-420). Whereas the argument of cultural orientations is directed at the cultural norms of ethnic groups, that of the structural position largely focuses on parental socio-economic status (SES), which is connected with parental participation, quality of instruction, school peers, teachers and other influences. Most academic discussions fall along the interplay of the two approaches of cultural orientations and the structural position whereby some

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[1] There is overwhelming literature on this issue. What follows is merely a simplified review of a wide range of factors explored in the UK and USA literature that cause the failure of ethnic minorities in either schools or the larger society. Of which some are only applicable to certain minority groups while other may be to different ones. This review aims to present, not exhaust, some main academic findings so as to inform my study in the remaining chapters.

[2] Actually even within the same ethnic group the educational gap is also observable. See Kao and Thompson (2003).

theoretical arguments fall in between (ibid.). Departing from these approaches, recent research has been conducted increasingly in greater details that is grounded in various contexts. This has made research findings convincing as well as easier for schools and governments to design context-specific policies for different students. However, the contextualisation of research subjects has very much complicated explanations of variations in the educational achievement of different ethnic (sub-) groups. The more serious consequence of this complication is that there is less consistency in academic explanations and so it becomes difficult to develop a coherent theory.

What is largely absent here is the issue of upward social mobility that education supposedly aims at in that the concern of social mobility directly holds up the motive and motivation of ethnic groups for education.[3] In fact, 'educational aspirations are universally high for all racial and ethnic groups' (ibid.:435). This is to say that abstract aspirations are high for all groups despite differences in the concrete reality. So what has prevented some minorities from concretising, and further, realising their abstract aspirations? Put another way, what has complicated their desire for (or even commitment to) social mobility that led to their different educational outcomes? In this light, students are not only passive subjects of their cultural or socio-economic backgrounds, they are also actors who *develop* their cultural norms in response to education and related opportunities for social mobility. Under this view, John Ogbu (1987, 1998) formulates a cultural-ecological framework that attempts to explain how different ethnic minorities shaped their views of the social system as a response to the perceived treatment they received from the mainstream society.[4]

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[3] It is not fair to say that all arguments are not concerned with social mobility. The difference is whether or not social mobility is the focus of analyses, (and further, whether or not it is understood merely economically as I shall discuss below). In other words, studies should substantially move beyond schools per se on the one hand, and on the other hand, should be expanded from pre-school preparation to perception about post-school opportunities.

[4] Ogbu (1987, 1998) places minority school performance against his framework of *the (social) system* and *community forces*, and argues that distinctive minorities foster different cultural models (community forces) in response to the system or the dominant group's treatment of them. He locates minority communities in action to depict their strategies towards existing power relations. Such an interactive perspective allows Ogbu to set up the pair of concepts – voluntary and involuntary minorities – with which he has explained why some minority groups have the motivation to perform well while others show resistance or reluctance in school study. However, this heuristic framework does not stand without its defects, and in fact his key concept of

Social mobility is in the first instance measured by economic indicators of income or occupation (profession) (Loury, Modood and Teles 2005). While an income indicator is purely economistic, professional membership is associated with both economic well-being and power and prestige. Nonetheless, both approaches primarily focus upon the labour market. This focus is challenged by a third approach under the concept of social citizenship which sees social mobility in terms of recognition – the degree to which individuals are recognised by others as being equal partners in the community. Further, whether or not or to what extent a group is recognised by others does not necessarily correspond to its position in the labour market but is partially independent (ibid.). In this light, social mobility can also be understood as 'securing symbolic goods dispensed not by markets, but by private and public institutions' (e.g. language policy) (Teles, Mickey and Ahmed 2005:523). Meanwhile, different social or cultural groups develop different understandings of social mobility, or individual or group progress, on account of their differential historical experiences and cultures (ibid.). Moreover, many of the means by which people seek to advance themselves are profoundly shaped by public policies that political institutions have introduced. Therefore the state plays a central role as a decision-maker and producer of goods (ibid.) in personal advancement. Thus, the social dimension (broadly understood) of social mobility is perhaps even more foundational (Loury, Modood and Teles 2005) when mobility is seen from a perspective of life courses as a whole rather than merely measured by economic achievements.

Indeed, when we depart from the point of social mobility, the question that should be asked in the first place is: can ethnic minorities achieve as much as they should in social mobility in accordance with their educational performance? And the sequential questions will be: if ethnic minorities cannot achieve equal social mobility in spite of equal educational attainment, what blocks their success in the larger society? Does inequality in opportunities for social mobility just impact on individuals or is it systematically encountered by ethnic minority groups? More specifically, is the persistent failure of some ethnic minority students in schools a reflection of the failure of their communities in the larger society (see, for

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in/voluntary minorities is particularly misleading. A detailed discussion of the relative strengths and weaknesses of his theory can be found in chapter two.

example, Ferguson 2005)? In this vein, the relationship between educational performance and social mobility become much more complicated than we may assume, which requires research into educational achievement from within and without schools, and relatedly, not only into educational *outcome* but also *process*. As a matter of fact, even those minorities who outperform their majority peers are still likely not to achieve as well as they should in the labour market (Strategy Unit 2003; Woo 2002). In this light, both low and high educational performers among ethnic minorities can be regarded as having to overcome specific barriers either in schools or in the wider society. Therefore, a common ground around the relationship between education and social mobility emerges that brings together both low and high educational achievers of ethnic minorities in relation to the majority in the social system, and thus it is possible to advance a consistent set of arguments that allows for consideration of both the cultural and socio-economic dimensions.

In his analysis of the persistence of low educational performance of blacks in the USA, Ferguson (2005) subtly and convincingly relates socio-economic to cultural factors. He argues there have long existed differences in the ways in which the ethnic majority and minority (for Ferguson, whites and blacks) have coped with and adapted to their positions in the nation's hierarchy of power and privilege, which reflect psychological self-defence mechanisms, social interaction patterns and disparities in access to opportunities. Such patterns help determine 'the economic wherewithal of families to provide for their children, the child-rearing methods that families grow accustomed to using and the ways that they understand and interact with mainstream institutions such as schools'. In a word, the minority socio-economic status is largely associated with race or ethnicity (ibid.) that is socially constructed. This race- or ethnicity-rooted disparity is likely to lead to, for example, the differences in parenting that supposedly prepare minority children for different cognitive or learning styles on the one hand (Blair 2001; Osborne 2001), and on the other, do not prepare minority children with the necessary knowledge bases before schooling or even before kindergarten (Ferguson 2005). As a result, minority students appear to have difficulties in understanding what is being taught in schools. In a word, these kinds of pre-

school parenting practices result in minority children's under-preparation in skills and knowledge that are needed in formal education (ibid.).

Moreover, these socially constructed differences are also practised by the educational system itself, which directly impacts on minority school performance. This may be associated with the curriculum that is irrelevant to, or negatively represents ethnic minorities (Blair 2001; Demie 2001, 2002). Practices may also be reflected in schools' and teachers' treatment of minority students, which have made minority children study ineffectively. These practices are various but are, quite often, interconnected. They include teachers' ignorance of the different learning styles and experiences of minority students, such as some minority children's aversion to intellectual competition; teachers' neglect of the disadvantage of the language of minority children when the medium of instruction is not in mother tongues of minority students; lower expectations of minority students among teachers who consider that minorities are intellectually inferior; teachers' frequent and harsh sanctions on minority children (Blair 2001; Demie 2001, 2002; Ferguson 2005). These practices are likely to result in a poor quality of instruction from teachers, and prevent the latent potential of minority students from being brought out, not to mention being cultivated (Ferguson 2005).[5]

The observations made by Ferguson and others reveals that the disadvantage of minority students is, in one essential way, caused by racism related to colour or to culture, or both.[6] Racism is an overwhelming social power that is associated with

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[5] However, teachers may favour some minority students (e.g. Chinese and Indians) over others, even those from the ethnic majority (e.g. whites), for their characteristics such as industriousness, obedience, cooperation and so on. In return, these students are also likely to receive quality instruction from teachers, which significantly help them with their self-esteem, enthusiasm and finally, high performance. Nevertheless, one must be cautious when attempting to take this as a model for other minority groups with lower achievement by which minorities, both successful and failed, are likely to be considered to be responsible for their schooling. Further, whether or not to possess certain aforementioned desirable characteristics or qualities can possibly be associated with their community cultures without a sufficient examination of the role that the social system can or should play in helping minorities with their school performance. Another consequence is that this will easily undermine self-esteem of students with low achievement given the sensitivity, subtlety and significance of the cultural issue in self-consciousness and self-evaluation. In this sense, even if some aspects of certain minority culture are considered to be in need of examination and transformation, how to achieve this goal is largely dependent upon how to achieve a balance between the examinations of cultural norms of ethnic minorities and the way the social system treats minorities. I will come back to the issue in chapter two that focuses on power relations.

[6] As a result of the blurring divide and mixing between culture and race, the concept of cultural racism emerged in the UK. Cultural racism is a further discourse built upon biological racism that

various social dimensions, ranging from legal, scientific, economic, to more subtle forms such as social, cultural, religious and psychological (Moodley 1999:151), which appear to be structural, institutional or individual (Blair 2001:29).[7] These forms are entangled with and reinforce one another on the one hand, and on the other, are not necessarily conscious in the minds of the people who are carrying them out such as teachers. One consequence of racism is to prevent minority children from getting access to quality instruction in schools, and at the same time to block minority members' access to the labour market in the wider society, which casts a dark shadow on minority children's motivation for study in schools (Blair 2001; Demie 2001, 2002). Due to its complexity and subtlety, it is very difficult for many minority people to overcome racism by themselves, and so it remains the case that many minority students are poor school performers. On the other hand, for those who outperform their ethnic majority, better performance seems to be the evidence of their success in overcoming racism in schooling. However, this does not necessarily mean that their better performance will lead them to a correspondingly better career as mentioned earlier, nor does it mean that they pay the same price to gain the same outcome or that they enjoy the learning process as much as their majority peers do. In this sense, their success in schooling is not necessarily a result of racism lessening in the larger society, but largely a result of their individual effort and the mobilisation of their community resources as Zhou (2005) delineates in her Chinese case (also see chapter two).

In the meantime, racism can also foster a counter-school culture that is adopted by some minority students to disengage themselves from schooling, which in turn

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evokes cultural differences in vilification, marginalisation or assimilation of groups who also suffer from biological racism (Modood 1997b:155). Therefore biological racism is essential to cultural racism although it might be a less explanatory aspect of a complex phenomenon (ibid.:156). For a discussion of the differences and connections between (colour) racism and cultural racism, see Modood (1997b). Also see May (1999) on anti-racism and critical multiculturalism.

[7] How to conceptualise racism or classify and define different forms of it is another complicated issue. However, although it will be over-simplistic and naïve to apply the concept of racism directly to the Chinese case as my study will show, similar forms of discrimination to those of racism in the context of ethnicity in China is widely observable such as individual, institutional or structural discrimination (in particular see chapters six and seven), or discrimination as an ideology (especially in chapter eight). As my main theoretical sources are not racism (see chapter two), I am not going further with the language of racism. Interested readers can consult Miles & Brown (2003), particularly parts II and III.

contributes to their poor school performance. Peer pressure is a typical example that in essence is counter-academic in nature. Ferguson offers another example along similar lines in relation to youth culture. He argues that some black children would rather be 'distracted' by black youth culture (e.g. rap music) from academic activities like leisure reading, class attendance and reading scores (Ferguson 2005). For them, spending time on black youth culture can be a gesture of showing black identity. In other words, rap music is more than a simple entertainment for black youth as it is for whites in that it plays a role of self-expression and self-assurance in relation to black identity. Furthermore, some other factors that may cause the poor school performance of minority children can be indirectly connected with racism, such as school resources, school finance, class size, grouping and tracking (ibid.). By and large, racism is, to a large extent, responsible for poor minority performance in schools and/or the larger society in that it is difficult for minority children to define and value themselves through academic studies, nor can they value academics while still maintaining the integrity of the self (Osborne 2001:45). Meanwhile, it also leads to an imbalance between educational performance and social mobility even with good school performers from ethnic minorities.

The politics of multiculturalism

Racism is rooted in a belief in the superiority and universality of the dominant ethnic group that sets the standard for the rest of society. The standard is roughly the equivalent of what Kymlicka terms 'the societal culture' (1995, 2000, 2001, 2002). In contrast to such a situation, Kymlicka aims to advocate a thin societal culture that is territorially concentrated, and 'centred on a shared language which is used in a wide range of societal institutions, in both public and private life' (Kymlicka 2002:346). In other words, the aspects of, for example, religion, family customs and personal lifestyle are supposed to be left to citizens themselves without interference. However, Kymlicka also encourages appreciating more than one societal culture because a single societal culture only reflects one, usually the dominant group's, culture, and therefore can hardly function properly in promoting the integration of citizens in a multinational society (ibid.:346-347). This advocacy of the pluralisation of societal culture is fundamentally driven by the idea of the rejection of the view of universality and superiority that has

granted legitimacy to the dominant group to oppress other groups. Iris Young (1990) unmasks the injustice of this universality by drawing attention to three of its oppressive consequences. First, all the rules and standards have already been set in terms of dominant culture before dominated groups participate in the social game. This has resulted in blindness to group differences, and further, in disadvantaging these late-participants. Correspondingly, it is also blind to the specificity of the privileged group, and gives them the illusion that their own viewpoint and experience embody a neutral and universal humanity. This universalism in the end leads to a serious consequence in that disadvantaged groups have internalised a devaluation of themselves, which has helped to produce a double consciousness in their self-understanding that is always looking at one's self through the eyes of others (Du Bois 1969[1930]:45, cited in Young 1990:60).

By and large, without recognition and appreciation of cultures other than the dominant one, dominated cultures and their members are likely to be marginalised from formal institutions. One severe consequence is that this marginalisation usually leads to the implication that dominated cultures are of low value, and further, that the ownership of dominated cultures has a low image. This marginalisation and low perception of dominated groups will lead students of dominated groups to find themselves in a discontinuity between their community cultures and the school (i.e. public institution) culture so that they have to make an effort to bridge the gap by investing (much) more time, energy or even more money in schooling. Relatedly, they have to overcome other difficulties in schooling caused by the low perception (e.g. the perception of their lack of 'merit' as a result of the cultural discontinuity) and maltreatment of them by teachers (and their fellow students as well) and the low quality of instruction as argued earlier. They will suffer as a result of their treatment and not become as competitive as their peers from the dominant groups in schools or in the labour market.

Low attainment of ethnic minorities in schools, and/or further, in the larger society, raises a serious question for the state, academics as well as the public as to how to treat ethnic minorities of distinctive cultures in mainstream institutions

that are established on the basis of the dominant culture. This is not about education per se that focuses on merit of students. In other words, minority families or communities should not be blamed without caution for their failure in educational performance when they are largely victims in this 'civilization clash'. By the same token, it would be over-simplistic to take successful minorities as the role model in that this implies that the failure of other minorities is the result of their lack of intellectual merit (and relatedly, motivation) and positive cultural norms and values for education rather than a result of unequal treatment of ethnic majority and minority cultures by public policy and discourse in the wider society. In this light, what is now known as multiculturalism emerged in close association with a movement under the banner of cultural rights. The term *multiculturalism* came into being in the 1960s and 1970s in countries like Canada and Australia, and to a lesser extent, Britain and the United States (Modood 2001:562). This movement was closely associated with the post-war influx of immigrants to Western countries, and evolved into a coalition with other movements emerging earlier or later: the feminist movement, black or gay movements etc. Academically it is usually discussed under such labels as the *politics of difference*, *politics of recognition*, *identity politics* or (*politics of) multiculturalism,* all of which are embedded in a similar underlying idea of cultural rights or cultural membership while carrying slightly different connotations (Kymlicka 2002:327). The range of requirements for the rights demanded by these different groups is wide and various.[8]

On the other hand, each country has employed different policies towards ethnic minorities' requirements for rights that are based on their different histories and political philosophies (Castles 1995; Castles and Miller 1998; Modood 1997a; Favell 2001; Koopmans and Statham 2000). Parekh discusses four views on the political structure of multicultural societies that he names proceduralist, assimilationist, civic assimilationist and millet models (2000:199-206). Each model is an attempt to cope with the relationship between diversity and unity. The proceduralist model means a state that stays morally neutral and lays down 'the

[8] Parekh (2000:3-4) classifies and evaluates three most common forms of cultural diversity with regard to cultural rights, namely, subcultural diversity such as Gays and Lesbians, perspectival diversity such as feminists and environmentalists, and communal diversity such as indigenous peoples, immigrants and religious communities.

minimally necessary general rules of conduct, subject to which citizens remain free to lead their self-chosen life'. The millet model refers to the kind of structure in which aliens settling in the hosting society are allowed to govern their communities with their own laws, customs and practices. As a view occupying a halfway house between the proceduralist and the assimilationist, the civic assimilationist model is based on the view that although cultures other than the dominant one are free to flourish, this is confined to the relatively private realm such as family or communal associations. Perhaps the most serious consequence of this model is that members (especially the youth) of other cultures internalise their inferiority which has led them to confused lives or to retreat into their communal ghettos – as Iris Young similarly observes above.[9] However, Parekh considers that the assimilationist and millet theories are both defective as they more or less ignore the claims of diversity or unity respectively. The other two models respect both diversity and unity, but fail to appreciate their dialectical interplay.[10]

Therefore, multiculturalism is a social perspective that emerged from the growing awareness of cultural diversity, i.e. of the importance of diversity for people to have a meaningful life and for a modern society that recognises and appreciates the richness of humanities that is encouraged by cultural diversity. Further, multiculturalism can also be used to orient policy-making. In other words, multiculturalism is a social paradigm that has been provoked by a social movement on the one hand, and on the other, advanced by academic discourse and reflection on these movements. In the meantime, it has also been adopted by governments such as Canada and Australia as national policy. Whereas it is not always clear-cut between these different levels (e.g. in Britain, multiculturalism has not been taken up as a policy whereas in practice the state has promoted a

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[9] I have found the civic assimilationist model particularly relevant to or quite much mirroring the situation in China, which is also comparable to the republican model in France as Favell (2001) argues, to which I will come back in chapters two, five and nine.

[10] Castles and Miller roughly divide different policy patterns into three categories (Castles and Miller 1998:244-252): the differential exclusionary model; the assimilationist model, and the multicultural model. However, exclusionary and assimilationist models are either problematic or unlikely to succeed. The former has been proven to lead society towards segregation whereas the latter has produced social injustice as a result of the neglect of the cultural and social situation of settlers. On the contrary, the multiculturalism model – even if it may be superficial and imperfect particularly in its early period – significantly responds to the needs of settlers and is a statement about the openness of the nation to cultural diversity, and so is a justifiable alternative (ibid.:252).

package of multiculturalist measures (Modood1997)), multiculturalism is essentially understood as recognition of cultural diversity in my thesis. This understanding is directed at a public accommodation of diversity, and more importantly, serves to suggest a new direction in policy-making that considers entitling minorities to social citizenship in the form of their cultural rights or membership in the larger society. As a result, this understanding will lead to reconciliation between legal formalities and public discourse and attitudes in terms of the cultural membership of ethnic minorities.[11]

About this research

In spite of some disagreements,[12] one standpoint that is held by all the commentators cited above is the rejection of the view of the universality and superiority of the dominant group in either terms of colour or culture, or their mixture. This is also the bedrock of my arguments. However, historically there was not an analogous concept to racism in the Chinese context although it is true that China imported the term of racism from Europe in the nineteenth century. This is because the Chinese population was rather homogeneous historically in terms of race, and China is not an immigrant country which has brought in a large number of peoples with different physical features as that has occurred to the USA and UK. This makes the ethnic composition in China less heterogeneous compared to the USA and the UK.[13] Relatedly, Kymlicka's classification of three models of multiculturalism (or group differential rights) that correspond to three different types of minorities is not applicable to China.[14] Nonetheless, China has long had its own version of universality and superiority of the dominant group, the Chinese Han. This is what is known as *culturalism* (in this sense it may be

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[11] A distinction between multicultural society and multiculturalist society must be made here. The former is a term describing diversity of society whereas the latter refers to recognition of diversity. In other words, a multicultural society could be a monoculturalist society where other cultures than the dominant one are marginalised. In fact it is rarely the case that a society is not multicultural whilst recognition of cultural diversity by the public, academics or in policies is not always the case in many multicultural societies.

[12] The USA case is different from that of the UK. Interested readers can consult May (1999) and McLaren and Torres (1999).

[13] The concept of immigrant country I am employing here is different from that applied to the kind of country where the majority of its settlers were immigrants such as Australia, the USA, Canada or Singapore (See Ogbu and Simons 1998). It also incorporates countries with a large number of immigrants such as many Western European countries.

[14] Therefore I am not adopting Kymlicka's framework systematically in my study whereby some of his concepts will be employed at times when necessary.

relatively close to cultural racism rather than colour racism), a tradition of seemingly ranking peoples though by its own criterion that took shape in the Chinese context as I shall discuss in chapter four. Culturalism held Confucianism as its doctrine to distinguish outsiders from insiders, or barbarians from civilizers. In this sense, the most important difference between the culturalism discourse in China and the (colour-derived) racial discourse lies in the view of the potential transformability of aliens, physically or culturally, partially or completely. In spite of the fact that Chinese would also employ the cluster of terms of race (*zhong, renzhong, zhongzu*) on certain occasions, it does not necessarily convey the same meaning as my case studies will show in chapter eight.[15]

Indeed, even today, culturalism is still essential for China to distinguish 'them' from 'us'. This is true with its domestic minorities, and also true in its attitude towards foreign peoples, regardless of the race they belong to, as I shall argue in detail in chapter four. One example is associated with the way that the mainstream group members perceive Tibetans and Muslims in northwest China as my case studies will show in detail in chapter eight. In spite of their physical and linguistic closeness to the majority Han compared to Tibetans, Muslim Hui are regarded as more alien than Tibetans because Islamic culture (rather than sinicised Muslims) is more incompatible with the Han culture from a Han perspective. In the meantime, they would be accepted if they remove their religious markers and/or sinicise themselves as I shall discuss in chapters seven and eight.

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[15] Duara (1993) has observed that the threat towards Chinese cultural values arose on several occasions and produced several reactions from the Chinese literati and populace in history. On this basis he suggests that culturalism that assumes the cultural superiority of the Chinese (seeking no legitimation or defence outside of the culture itself) is difficult to be identified as a distinct form in Chinese history. This argument is too narrow to be justifiable in that the supposed cultural superiority of Chinese, even under threat at times, has never faded away. Quite the reverse, since China successfully accepted and sinicised alien cultures such as Buddhism in history, this has in turn reinforced its belief in the power of its culture (in a literary and moral sense. Same as below). In fact Chinese hold a general view towards the power of culture, to which other 'hard' forces are not considered to be comparable, such as technology or military that are regarded not as advanced as culture. This is also why, though partially, contemporary Chinese leaders insist on 'ruling the country with morality' (*yi de zhi guo*), and some Chinese intellectuals believe that Chinese culture is the remedy for the increasingly chaotic world. More relevant information can be found in chapter four. In addition, the imagined cultural superiority of the Chinese should also be understood from a context-specific view – this culturalism is not exercised as aggressively or tangibly as, for example, the racial superiority is in the West (so this difference itself appears to be cultural). This is perhaps, though partly, why it is regarded as not being constantly continuous from a Western perspective.

Another very important feature of Chinese culturalism is that it is that level of education is a central criterion by which an alien can be identified as Chinese or vice versa, dependent on whether or not she or he 'cultured' with the Confucian classics. Hence Chinese culturalism is primarily race- or colour-blind but uses an education-based criterion to distinguish between different peoples. In spite of the differences outlined, both the UK and USA (cultural or colour) racism and Chinese culturalism conduct marginalisation or assimilation of dominated groups under the view of superiority and universality of the dominant culture and group. It is thus interesting to look in detail into the process by which this Chinese culturalism operates with regard to its ethnic minorities, and whether or not it is also entangled with racial discourse to some extent or in some contexts. More importantly, how this culturalism works in the education system, its traditional terrain, becomes particularly interesting to examine.

As I shall illustrate in chapter five, underachievement in China is an issue which arises in relation to the education of ethnic minorities or, literally, minority education (*minzu jiaoyu*). Recent research and statistics on the achievements of minorities reveal a complex picture. Nationally, several minority groups persistently have higher achievement than the majority Han (e.g. Korean, Uzbek, Tartar) and at a regional level, some individual minority groups or sub-groups perform better than the Han (see, for example, Harrell and Ma 1999; RhSKTS and JF 2003; RPB and RhSKTS 2002; Xinwen Bangongshi 2005). Nevertheless, the situation in which minority students on average perform relatively poorly in schools still persists, although the degree to which this is the case varies geographically and/or ethnically. Further, the picture of the educational performance of ethnic minorities from a better-off socio-economic background appears to be more complex and complicated as a result of the exclusion of them in the larger society. This will be shown through minority narratives of education, social mobility and cultural difference in chapters six and seven.

Therefore, my research begins with the examination of the relationship between ethnicity and educational performance that is directed at forms of cultural exclusion experienced by ethnic minorities. The examination is located in the process in which ethnic minorities' desire for or commitment to achieving social

mobility through education is complicated by the mainstream agenda of integrating them into the Han nation-state. The research is oriented by Ogbu's cultural-ecological framework that studies the relationship between ethnicity and educational performance in the context of an interaction between the social system and ethnic minorities. It is also directed by the thesis of cultural capital and social capital developed by Bourdieu, Putnam and other social scientists, and by the theory of multiculturalism elaborated by Kymlicka, Parekh and others. The research sets out to decipher the discourse in which the ideological agenda of integrating minorities into the cultural majority develops at the expense of minority cultures and their symbolic images. The study is underpinned by a dialogic hermeneutic framework in which identity construction is modelled as discursive repertoires. Discursive repertoires are examined through historical investigation, current policy and public discourse analysis, and ethnographic fieldwork, which are interconnected and meanwhile constitute a triangulation approach for my examination.

The examination starts with an investigation into the historical formulation of the cultural superiority and universality of the Han that is labelled as culturalism as argued earlier. This culturalism determined ethnic community boundaries and membership, sequentially shaped the Chinese educational tradition that in turn holds up a Han culture- or Confucian-based elitist view at the philosophical level, and operated an examinations-guided institution at the technical level (the civil service examinations). As a legacy, it has largely determined education policy and public views, and the educational experiences of ethnic minorities today despite the fact that the exact form that the culturalism takes has changed over time and in relation to changing material conditions. Therefore, the study goes further to examine current state policy with regard to the education of ethnic minorities and academic literature relating to ethnicity, education and culture. Finally, I look in detail into the varied educational experiences of ethnic minorities in the cultural exclusion that are mainly premised on the ethnographic data of interviews between the inquirer (myself) and individual research participants from Han, Muslim and Tibetan communities.

My research thus scrutinises the varied experiences of ethnic minorities in relation to their cultural exclusion, and the social exclusion that is interlocked with the former, in schools as well as in the larger society of contemporary China. The cultural exclusion is grounded in the historical culturalism of Han superiority and universality that has essentially contributed to the establishment of *the* societal culture, which has become thickened in the climate of modern Chinese society. Under these circumstances, ethnic minorities are deprived of the cultural or social capital and so put on an unequal footing with the majority Han. This process involves a variety of growing or weakening components such as moral, cultural and social mobility with respect to education, which are entangled with one another and together complicate the educational landscape in the wider social context. Therefore, my study is not only about education, nor does it make education its primary aim. Rather, it departs from educational performance, and tries to unveil what variables hide behind the achievement gap by looking at socio-economic, political, cultural and historical dimensions. The study aims to make a contribution to a limited (albeit growing) research focusing on ethnic minorities in China, particularly from a sociological perspective.

The study focuses on northwest China as the research field for the reason that the existing literature on ethnicity in both Chinese and English largely concentrates on the southwest. It equally incorporates both culturally and politically more visible ethnic communities (e.g. the Tibetan) and less heard of and so relatively under-researched ones (e.g. Muslim Hui, Salar and Bonan, the Muslim groups in this study that are different from the more visible ones in Xinjiang, e.g. Uygur). More importantly, this methodological approach allows the research to bridge the gap between studies of ethnic minorities that are usually conducted separately along the lines of related ethnic cultures. So while a study centres on Muslim Hui, the majority Han and/or other ethnic minority communities such as Tibetans in the region that have immediate contact with Hui are usually absent in the study. In this way, my research is particularly interested in the interaction between different 'civilizations', in my case focusing on interethnic relationships between Muslims, Tibetans and Han against the social system. Moreover, this interaction is not one

between two groups of a minority and the Han as some research has done,[16] but a multi-dimensionally interactive 'net' in which more than two groups interact with one another that is driven by and also in turn (re)shapes government policies towards ethnic minorities as a whole. In this light, I set up two research aims:

1. To examine the causes and effects of the cultural exclusion of Tibetan and Muslim students in schooling.
2. To consider what might improve the inclusion of ethnocultural minorities in schools.

The first research aim needs to be realised through answering five research questions as follows:

1. How did Chinese culturalism historically shape ethnic community boundaries and membership, what is its educational legacy and how has this legacy determined the educational experiences of ethnic minorities?
2. What do the existing literature and policy documents tell us about the way in which the mainstream society treats ethnocultural minorities with regard to schooling?
3. How does the mainstream cultural group in state schools perceive Muslim and Tibetan students and their ethnic communities?
4. What are the attitudes of Muslim and Tibetan students towards the curriculum, their ethnic communities and their own identity in schooling as well as the larger society?
5. What are the Muslim and Tibetan parents' evaluation of schooling, socio-economic status and cultural identity of their ethnic communities as a whole?

The second research aim will be developed in the concluding chapter as illustrated in the following section. This is largely oriented to the theory of multiculturalism.

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[16] A very recent example is that several papers on interethnic relations between the Han and Islamic peoples (Hui or Uygur) in China were published in the latest issue of *Asian Ethnicity* (Mackerras 2005; Yee 2005; Zang 2005) that were presented in the conference on 'Ethnicity in Multicultural Asia: Theory and Findings' held in Hong Kong in November 2003.

Outline of the chapters

The next chapter, **chapter two** departs from the notion of power relations and scrutinises the cultural-ecological framework of Ogbu, the cultural capital theory of Bourdieu and the social capital thesis of Bourdieu, Putnam and other social scientists with especial reference to minority education. In doing so, the chapter develops a theoretical framework that principally aims to inform the empirical studies which follow. **Chapter three** is an explanation of the research approach and description of the fieldwork. **Chapter four** is an historical investigation of Chinese Han culturalism. This aims to locate the education of ethnic minorities – both the policy and the educational experiences of ethnic minorities – in the Chinese cultural context that historically shaped it. **Chapter five** is a critical literature review of educational policies, practices and the mainstream discourses about the minority population with reference to education. It maps out a backdrop, against which the minority population and their cultures are located and evaluated in line with the mainstream Han ideology.

Chapters six, seven and eight are empirical studies that draw upon fieldwork in the borderland areas between Qinghai and Gansu provinces, northwest China. **Chapter six** examines the cultural membership choices and constraints facing Tibetan people by focusing on the predicament that Tibetan parents and students face in school choice. **Chapter seven** reveals the Muslim community's disengagement from state schools as a response to their ethnic identity as a people of 'familiar strangers' in the wider Chinese Han cultural context. **Chapter eight** looks at how the mainstream members in school perceive Tibetan and Muslim minority communities and students. Through close scrutiny of the similarities and differences in the mainstream group's perception of Tibetans and Muslims, it will decipher the discursive repertoires in which the ideological agenda of integrating minorities into the mainstream develops.

Based on a summary of the empirical studies, **chapter nine**, the conclusion, addresses the pedagogical implications of the minority school performance for both schools and the larger society. This aims to promote a theory of cultural citizenship by advocating a (re-)negotiation of the project of nation-building and modernisation of the state and minority rights, which is directed at achieving the

goal of fully including the minority population of distinctive cultures into the larger society. In the meantime, this approach also serves to identify further research areas as an extension of this study.

Terminology

A few key terms that are used throughout the thesis need to be clarified here whereas explanations of other terms will appear in the remaining relevant chapters. In modern Chinese there is only one word for different ethnic populations within its boundaries, *(min)zu*, which had long been translated into *nationality* in English. However, informed readers may have found that I adopted terms *ethnic*, *ethnicity* rather than *nationality* in spite of the fact that self-consciousness of ethnic identity was largely absent in the governmental identification of the 56 ethnic groups that embarked upon some 50 years ago.[17] Probably because official definitions are not derived from nowhere or merely a result of social engineering, and meanwhile the definitions have inevitably led to an awareness of ethnic identity among both the Han and non-Han groups, *nationality*, the English translation of the Chinese concept of *(min)zu*, was gradually replaced by *ethnicity* in its English translation in some government documents and academic research some 15 years ago. This signals that the concept of ethnicity has been imported to Chinese discourse.[18]

However, my adoption of the term of ethnicity or ethnic is in a more linguistic sense for reasons of convenience even though I also employ the term of nationality on several occasions with regard to historical discourse wherever necessary. On the other hand, my thesis does not particularly focus on the confusion over the ethnic identity issue. This is also associated with the nature of the ethnic minority groups that my thesis takes as subjects, Tibetans and Muslims in the northwest. They are relatively less unsure about their ethnic identity than many others even though they may not know the official terminology used to

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[17] More information on the official 'Ethnic (Minorities) Identification Project' (*minzu shibie gongzuo*), such as its rationale, criteria and arbitrariness, can be found in Fei Xiaotong (1980) and other scholars (e.g. Gladney 2004, Tapp 2002 and Xie Jian 2004).

[18] In return, a new Chinese word for 'ethnicity' that was adopted in Hong Kong and Taiwan before being accepted by mainland China is used within academic circles, *zuqun* (lit. ethnic group). In spite of this, *minzu* is still the only name for 'ethnicity' or 'nationality' that is bewared and used by other entities or people.

describe them until reaching schooling age (Ma Rong 2003a:13). However, I identified the ethnicity of some students in the mainstream school in the fieldwork whereas it appeared to be obscure to me. My records were basically dependent upon their self-consciousness and self-identification. The relevant information can be found in chapter six.

I use the pair of terms *minority/majority* in line with the government and public discourse in that (ethnic) *minority* always refers to non-Han groups whether or not they are quantitatively dominant groups, for example, in their autonomous regions. Correspondingly, the term *majority* is exclusively directed at the Han community.[19] By the same token, I refer to the majority Han when employing such terms as *dominant*, *mainstream*, *ordinary, subordinate* or *common* whereas terms like *dominated*, *peripheral, subordinated* or *marginal* are used to refer to ethnic minorities, unless indicated otherwise.

[19] For an examination of heterogeneity of the Han, readers can consult works by researchers like Blum (2001), Ebrey (1996) and Gladney (2004).

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter aims to set out the theoretical framework of the thesis so as to inform and guide the subsequent chapters of historical background, policy analysis, and more importantly, of empirical investigation. Following the previous chapter which briefly highlighted the theoretical models this research adopts, the theoretical framework of this chapter will take power relations as the departure point, and school performance as the main indicator, to focus on the social system and community forces towards it. In this light, three relevant theoretical approaches with regard to education, culture and society, and interrelations between them are critically examined in Section One. The approaches are respectively a) the cultural-ecological framework elaborated by John Ogbu; b) the theory of cultural capital proposed by Pierre Bourdieu and; c) the theory of social capital developed by Bourdieu, Putnam and other social scientists. Section Two further explores the links and divergences between the three approaches that are directed at the intersection between capital, culture and power relations. In the conclusion to this chapter, I highlight some of the theoretical and methodological deficiencies of the three theses.

Three theoretical approaches

Cultural-ecological theory

In the literature dealing with unequal school achievement with regard to ethnic minorities, one of the most influential frameworks is John Ogbu's 'cultural-ecological theory' (Ogbu 1987; Ogbu & Simons 1998). Ogbu develops his theory, based on an examination of power relations between different groups, mainly by examining minorities' interpretations of and responses to the social system. He locates minority communities in action to delineate their strategies towards existing power relations. Such an interactive perspective allows Ogbu to set up the pair of concepts – voluntary and involuntary minorities – with which he has

explained why some minority groups have the motivation to perform well while others show resistance or reluctance in school study.

Ogbu places minority school performance against his framework of *the (social) system* and *community forces*, and argues that distinctive minorities foster different cultural models (community forces) in response to the system or the dominant group's treatment of them. In Ogbu's eyes, different minority groups interpret and respond differently to the system as a result of their distinctive histories. Those mainly driven by economic interests, and who voluntarily immigrate into the host society or system, believe that they will have better opportunities for their advancement than in their place or country of origin. These minority groups therefore hold a positive perception of their situation that leads them to take positive actions towards their future prospects in their ecological environment: to work hard in society and to perform excellently in school. So these groups' members tend to overcome the cultural and linguistic barriers they face in schooling and are finally able to perform better in school. Ogbu classifies these as *voluntary minorities*.

For Ogbu, voluntary minorities do not regard themselves as being in opposition to the dominant group in the light of power relations, although they may face some discrimination from, or have to be subordinated to, the dominant group for some time when they first arrive in the host society. By contrast, those who view the system as an oppositional power against them are the minorities who were historically forced to come to the host society or conquered by the current dominant group. They therefore believe that they are and will be facing numerous barriers that will block their success in society even if they achieve highly in schools and work hard as an adult. This perception will cultivate a negative view among them towards the dominant group and the system, and put both sides in a relation of mutual mistrust. As a result, this will significantly undermine their motivation in schooling and they will end up performing poorly. They are *involuntary minorities* in Ogbu's terms.

In examining interaction between the system and minority communities, Ogbu provides four distinguishable types of cultural model of ethnic minorities (Ogbu and Simons 1998, 169-176):

- Frames of reference, the way a person or a group looks at a situation in terms of whether or not he or she or they will succeed.
- Instrumental responses or folk theories of 'making it', i.e. a group's ideas about how to achieve success in society. This is also connected with what kind of people different communities tend to take as role models.
- Degree of trust in dominant (for Ogbu, white) people and their institutions, i.e. whether or not a group sees the institutions as providing a route to success in society through educating their children properly.
- Beliefs about the effect of adopting the mainstream (white) ways on minority identity, i.e. whether or not the learning of mainstream culture, language or ways will harm their group identities or help them overcome cultural barriers.

Here Ogbu primarily looks at two dimensions that together lead various minority groups to differing interpretations of and responses to the mainstream group: economic aspirations and the cultural concern, both of which are significantly informed and shaped by their relationship with the dominant group. This allows for an understanding of minorities' responses both instrumentally and symbolically, and more importantly, of the dilemma and possibility of reconciliation between an expectation for economic success and a desire for cultural identity. In other words, the underlying question in Ogbu's approach is whether or not or to what extent it is possible to achieve upward social mobility through education and at the same time to secure a cultural identity.

Ogbu's model has some defects, in both theory construction and applicability to cases in other contexts or countries. The dichotomous typology of voluntary/involuntary minorities in relation to variability in minority school performance has been challenged (Gibson et al. 1997). The inadequacy of the theory also lies in the fact that Ogbu overlooks both generational and gender differences (ibid.). In response to the criticism, Ogbu reminds readers that his

classification is about 'the dominant patterns of belief and behaviour within different minority groups', which 'represent Ends of a Continuum' (Ogbu & Simons 1998:168). He also points out that there exist 'class and regional differences in beliefs and behaviours within each minority group' (ibid.) – this implies the possible variability in performance between classes, between regions, and even between genders and generations within a minority group.[1]

What fundamentally reduces the validity of his theory is not the dichotomous typologies of accommodation and resistance, or success and failure, which correspond with his core typology of voluntary and involuntary minorities, nor his neglect of variability in school performance within a minority group along the lines of class, region, generation or gender. Rather, what makes Ogbu's thesis most vulnerable is that in the process of approaching his research subjects, he quite often diverges from the underlying concept of his thesis, power relations. This reduces the value of his typology of the system and community forces, and undermines the foundations and applicability of his classification of voluntary and involuntary minorities. In what follows I look in detail at the deficiency of his concepts in the light of power relations.

The system and *community forces*. Ogbu equates the system with the dominant group. This has several consequences. First, all dominant group members are assumed to possess the same perceptions of and attitude towards minorities. Secondly, in the way that the concept of 'system' is formulated, the policy issue is left out. As a matter of fact, the system is largely invisible and hence missed out in Ogbu's effort to take an interactive approach towards power relations, and becomes irrelevant. This ruling out of the system is also evident in a lack of analysis of the national ideologies on which policies in both schools and the larger society are premised (van Zanten 1997). Yet it is necessary to understand policy in order to understand how the system impacts on community forces. As a result, Ogbu does not substantially touch upon the interaction between the system and community forces through which power relations are supposed to be formed, and

[1] In his revised version, Ogbu did look at generational dimension. See Ogbu and Simons (1998).

community forces are thus basically an Ogbuian version of interpretations of minority perceptions of the system.

So far as community forces are concerned, the interaction between the minority and majority is not the only or absolute drive in forming community forces as Ogbu suggests. The interaction between different minority groups also plays an important part, even though this, to a considerable extent, may be shaped by the system. The conflicting aspects of interaction between differential minority groups is usually caused by unevenness in the political role or cultural profile of different minority groups, as well as in related opportunities in employment or education, etc. Some or all of these may be an unfortunate sequel to the differential policies and measures of the state towards different minority groups in accordance with the state's interests or ends. This differs from what is assumed or implied in Ogbu's analysis, that is, that different interpretations of and responses to the *same* treatment are largely determined by the minorities' differential histories. Rather, community forces may be caused by *different* treatments of the system. In other words, power relations are not dichotomous as the system and community forces distinction implies, but are multi-dimensional, i.e. they are involved with the relationships between the system and minority communities, between the majority (that does not necessarily overlap with the system in all contexts) and minority groups, and between minority communities.

Different treatments of the system also imply that there may be ambiguity, visible or invisible, in the system itself. This is mainly caused by ambivalence in the concern with relationships between cultural and political loyalty and cultural tolerance, when the system is trying to integrate ideas of political control, cultural diversity and citizenship cultivation, etc. into a coherent whole. This is particularly salient in the religious issue such as the idea of *laïcité* in French public policy (Favell 2001) or the CCP's contested attempt to maintain a balance between political loyalty and popular autonomy (Potter 2003). The former refers to the situation in which religious practice should recognize the principles of public political order, i.e. 'sacred secular ideas'. In other words, particularistic interests in and practices of one's own culture is structured or 'disciplined' through a state political engagement in the form of public associations in the

sense that the interests and practices would impair the liberty of others if an official sanction is absent. As a result, the political structure imposes its priority over cultural interests when there is a conflict (Favell 2001:74-79). The Chinese ambivalence is rooted in the tension between 'liberalization of socio-economic relations' and 'the imperative of repressing aspects of socio-economic change that threaten its political authority' (Potter 2003:337). In the course that the Party-state transfers its focus onto building a market economy, it correspondingly loosens up on political control. While arousing more desire for better socio-economic status, the transitional economy and society have also fostered cynicism and quiet resistance among the masses to both their political and economic situation. Religion appears as one of the main outlets for this cynicism and resistance, which is partially a result of the loosening-up of political control. Under these circumstances, the degree of state control over religion practice has become problematic and resulted in ambivalence for both the policy-makers and policy-executors. In attempting to maintain or adjust power relations in accordance with the interests or ends of the system, the system becomes ambivalent over the best way of keeping a desirable balance between several competing forces, which results in ambiguity in its policy.

Voluntary and *involuntary minorities*. Ogbu's amendment in response to criticism of his dominant patterns of the classification has some validity. His 'dominant patterns' allows for discussions of divergence of individuals or subgroups in accordance with class or regional differences within minority groups.[2] Nevertheless, Ogbu neglects the possibility of change in a minority group's status from involuntary to voluntary or vice versa, in particular historical circumstances – a factor Ogbu in particular puts weight on in addressing community forces. Such changes should be understood in terms of either historical transmission or geographical diffusion, or both simultaneously. A group that used to be voluntary in the past can become involuntary in the present or vice versa, as can be seen in the case of Black Americans in their first and second emancipations (Fordham 1996:80-101), and the Mexican case in the USA as will be revealed later on. This also involves the situation in which a group can change status as it moves to new

[2] Ogbu's approach does not cover the gender issue, which is also a reflection of power relations though I am not particularly dealing with this either in my research.

areas, e.g. Koreans in Japan may be involuntary and in the USA they may become voluntary. In the same vein, immigrants with a colonised history are not necessarily involuntary minorities (Eldering 1997). In short, whether or not a group is a voluntary or an involuntary minority can shift according to the historical or territorial context in which power relations keep changing.

Another related difficulty in the classification of voluntary and involuntary minorities lies in factors existing in the cultural-ecological settings of minority groups, and which influence the status of minorities in different ways that compete with each other. Gibson (1988) considers that in terms of different factors affecting minority (the Sikhs) school performance, some of them play a positive role while others play a negative role. For instance, when they hold optimistic occupational aspirations, they may have to cope with racial and ethnic hostility which tends to block their access to a deserved career; when parents hold positive expectations, their children may encounter peer pressure that is hostile to good performance. In short, no single set of factors is simultaneously either positive or negative in minority schooling. Some factors may make minorities 'voluntary' and some others may be quite the opposite. It is therefore difficult to establish a set of neat criteria to define a minority group as a voluntary or an involuntary one. This is why some minorities display characteristics of both voluntary and involuntary minorities (Gillborn 1997).

Ogbu predicts that 'differences among minorities in school performance are largely due to differences in community forces' (Ogbu and Simons 1998, note 11). This leads him to hypothesise a cause-effect relation between *voluntary* minorities and *high* achievement, and *involuntary* minorities and *low* achievement. This is also open to question, even in terms of the claim that this phenomenon represents a dominant pattern. This contradiction is, again, caused by Ogbu's neglect of the role the system may play in minority school performance when he is prioritising community forces. In other words, in terms of power relations between the system and ethnic minority communities, whereas involuntary minorities are not necessarily poor school performers (Eisikovits 1997; van Zanten 1997), the system can significantly obstruct some voluntary students in school performance and finally turn them into low achievers. The

latter can be seen, for example, from the case when the medium of instruction is exclusively the language of the dominant group. This situation tends to lead an inefficient learning process and an ineffective and unsatisfactory academic outcome, coupled with frustration and hopelessness, caused by the linguistic barrier. Relatedly, high performance in voluntary minorities is not automatically a result of 'additive' learning (Ogbu 1987, Gibson 1988, Ogbu and Simons 1998). By additive learning, Ogbu means that, on the one hand, minority students have learnt 'new skills, behaviours, and language that will enable them to succeed in society'; on the other hand, they could also 'retain their own culture and language' (Ogbu and Simons 1998:175), and, further, their ethnic identity. So learning a new culture and language is to add something more to their own culture or language. However, contrary to what Ogbu predicts here, for some voluntary minorities, the situation is that when they learn mainstream culture and language, the latter replace their own culture or language rather than simply add something more to them. This is rarely the desirable outcome to voluntary minorities.

Lastly, by adopting the concept of *settler society*, Ogbu is cautious in trying to restrict the application of his theory to the case studies within his selected societies, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, 'where the ruling or dominant group is made up of immigrants from other societies who have come to settle there because they want to improve their economic, political, and social status' (Ogbu and Simons 1998:162). This confinement is more likely to be a response to the criticism of the insufficiency of his theory when it is applied to different contexts or types of society, as some of his critics demonstrated (Gibson et al 1997). Nonetheless, power relations are an *essential* and *common* existence in all types of society. Therefore, whether a group is voluntary or involuntary in relation to its history is not exclusively connected to whether or not the society is a settler one. Rather, such a distinction can also be fostered in differing types of society, given the status of different ethnic groups in clusters of power relations. In other words, it does not make much sense for Ogbu to try to enhance the reliability of his theory by disconnecting the associations in terms of power relations between his cases and cases in what he defines as non-settler societies – Europe, China or elsewhere. In fact, Ogbu himself in the same article claims that his 'framework is not

specifically directed at any particular race and even at *any particular country*' (Ogbu and Simons 1998:167. Emphasis added). This claim is further supplemented by examples referring to several non-settler societies, such as China, Japan, Mexico, Ghana and France (ibid.).

On the whole, the concept of voluntary and involuntary minorities can be said to be somewhat misleading when applied to many cases, including Ogbu's cases as can be seen above. More importantly, the association of certain minorities with certain types of response and behaviour can also implicitly lead to stereotyping these minorities with the result that they are responsible for their disadvantaged status (Gillborn 1997). Hence this is not a valuable distinction. On the other hand, the system and community forces distinction has heuristic value as a general framework based on power relations between different social forces (see also Navarro 1997 and van Zanten 1997). This heuristic value at the same time also requires that we are clear about our definition and understanding of power relations: power relations are an essential and common, i.e. cross-society existence; power relations continue existing through constant interaction between differing social forces, which is multi-dimensional rather than from one side/layer or two sides/layers alone; power relations are changing in different contexts. Furthermore, methodologically, it is also evident that Ogbu provides a highly operationalisable model of a combination of both macro level and micro level approaches for an empirical study of the relationship between ethnicity and school performance, as my empirical studies will show.

The concept of cultural capital

Highlighting community forces shows that for Ogbu cultural and linguistic difference explanations put forward by some educational anthropologists in the USA do not account for the differences among some minorities in school performance, though cultural discontinuity between home and school does cause learning problems (Erickson 1987; Ogbu and Simons 1998:161). While it may be difficult to assess what factors, community forces or cultural differences, are more significant in minority school performance in general terms as opposed to looking at the issue on a case by case basis, a theory across the Atlantic that provides a parallel with cultural discontinuity explanations seems to be more widely

accepted and applied by European academics. The French theorist Pierre Bourdieu, in analysing the educational achievement gap between different classes, explains that distinctive class groups possess differential cultural heritages, some of which are more likely than others to be transformed into *cultural capital* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1986). It is cultural capital that causes different academic achievements of students from different cultural groups and, furthermore, leads this educational pattern to persist. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu, takes three forms: embodied, objectified and institutionalised. Its embodied form refers to the domestic transmission of cultural heritage. This is 'the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment' (Bourdieu 1986:48).[3] Its objectified state is observable in the form of cultural goods such as pictures, books, instruments, machines, etc. Its institutionalised form is most significantly embodied in academic qualifications or 'credentialisation'. That is to say, the embodiment of a particular culture rather than others is recognised and reproduced through the educational system. This institutionalisation has the crucial effect of guaranteeing the monetary value of a given academic qualification. In this way, it ultimately converts culture into economic value or capitalises culture.

Put simply, the institutionalisation of embodiment (partly through objectification) is a process in which the culture of certain groups is turned into (cultural) capital. Certain cultural groups are thus endowed with cultural capital. In terms of class disparity, this endowment is associated with ownership by the higher class of 'highbrow' (usually dominant) culture and language. The possession of highbrow culture and language means possession of cultural capital, the culture and language institutionalised through the educational mechanism. In turn, the possession of cultural capital by higher class children appears as 'merit' in schooling. In such circumstances, while the education system presupposes the possession of cultural capital equally for credentialisation in school, lower class students are placed in a disadvantaged position due to their lack of cultural capital or 'merit', simply because they are from a different culture. This educational or institutional system enables the higher class to maintain its dominant position

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[3] All the page numbers for Bourdieu 1986 refer to Halsey et al. (1997).

through legitimating the normative status and reproduction of its cultural heritage. Moreover, the success in schooling of some individuals from the lower class also helps to strengthen the educational system by legitimating the dominant culture.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital can be criticised for an inadequacy in evidence (Sullivan 2001), or for being more 'a weak figure of speech' rather than a 'potent and precise analytic tool' (DiMaggio 1979:1468). Even so, the theory of cultural capital, on the whole, is heuristic in a more general theoretical sense. This means that his theory has inspired a generation of theoretical hypotheses (ibid:1467) and has also been effectively operationalised in empirical studies, though 'in various different ways' (Sullivan 2001:896). The operationalisation of the theory is also expanded to studies of school performance along the lines of ethnicity or race (for instance, Kalmijn and Kraaykamp 1996; Lareau and Horvat 1999; Olneck 2000).

On the other hand, the adoption of the term 'capital' or 'institutionalisation' suggests that Bourdieu is cynical about possible changes to power relations that the dominated could make – marginalised groups in his eyes are primarily passive acceptors of the social system. In other words, Bourdieu's framework hardly allows one to theorise the attitudes and response of marginalised groups towards the repeatedly reproduced social mechanism, let alone strategies they may adopt, whether resistance or reluctance towards the system. More pessimistically, some individuals from marginalised groups are seen as (unintentional) contributors to the system when they achieve success in schools. By contrast, Ogbu seems to take minority students as relatively active actors in schooling. By going down to a more concrete level, Ogbu shows evidence that marginalised groups can be successful school performers who are also successful in combining the host society culture and their own cultures through education – an 'additive' learning outcome in Ogbu's terms. Even poor school performers for Ogbu are, at least in part, conscious actors. In the light of their perceptions of the ways in which the system treats them and of their socio-economic status in the host society as a result of this treatment, these school children have actively adopted corresponding strategies against the (perceived) system.

The concept of social capital

The cultural-ecological framework and cultural capital theory diverge from each other in their views of the role that marginalised group members play against the system. For Bourdieu, the social system is a result of certain power relations that in turn reproduce and reinforce the same pattern of power relations – cultural capital for him is a typical reflection of this reproduction mechanism. The dominated group members are not beneficiaries but either victims, passive acceptors or unintentional contributors to the persistence of the system. In contrast, Ogbu approaches the way in which marginalised communities take steps to overcome cultural or other barriers and make an optimal combination of cultural resources available to them from both schools and their communities; or they take action to reject schooling as a strategy of resisting the social mechanism by stressing or celebrating their own cultural heritages and identities.

Ogbu's approach to community forces is, in some way, transcended by some other research in which the community can be seen to have been mobilised as an active, intentionally organised social network in helping their (younger) members to achieve upward social mobility through education (Min Zhou 2005). In Min Zhou's research, the Chinese ethnic community in the US are not seen as playing a passive or invisible role in relation to the social system as illustrated by Bourdieu (in his class-based theory); nor, as Ogbu suggests, do they merely employ an 'opt-in' or 'opt-out' strategy based on their perceptions of the treatment they have received from the system, aiming either to fit into the social system or to reject it. In fact, the marginalised community, as Zhou illustrates, can play a significant role in the attempt to actively participate in the (mainstream) social system through becoming a 'Do It Yourself' actor in the first instance.

Zhou's approach brings to our attention the concept of social capital. Unlike cultural and economic capital, 'social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors' (Coleman 1988:S98). It encompasses 'social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (Putnam 2000:19). This is a network of connections characterised by mutual knowledge and recognition of its membership. This knowledge and recognition create, maintain and reinforce obligations and expectations between its members.

By effectively mobilising the network of relationships, social capital facilitates conversion from cultural capital to economic capital. By the same token, cultural and economic capitals also act as a basis to form social capital and further, add more value to it (Bourdieu 1986, Coleman 1988, Putnam 2000).[4]

Compared to the notion of cultural capital, social capital is not a theory that is particularly associated with educational issues. However, education is as important as other social institutions in the thesis of social capital in the sense that it 'seemed the key to both greater tolerance and greater social involvement', as Putnam suggests (Putnam 2000:18). Education indeed drew particular attention at the stage when social capital was popularised as a sociological concept by James Coleman in the 1980s (Coleman 1988).[5] One of the main ways illustrated by Putnam in which social capital helps academic achievement is that when parents and communities are engaged in schooling (e.g. have opportunities to communicate with the school or to participate in decision making in the school and are willing to help children with their school study, etc.), the level of their support for their children's achievement is high and that of their children's misbehaviour is low (Putnam 2000:296-306). By the same token, a lack of social capital means that communities and parents have few opportunities and/or little enthusiasm for their children's schooling, which is likely to further result in their children's disengagement from and poor performance in education.[6]

However, an important distinction that should be made between three types of social capital: bonding (exclusive), bridging (inclusive or horizontal) and linking

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[4] The notion of social capital that Bourdieu suggests is approached in a significantly different way from that of American positivists (e.g. Putnam). This will be illustrated later on. Here the conflation of the views of different theorists from distinctive traditions is based on the idea that, as a theory that is loosely defined as social relationships, differential approaches to social capital can be temporarily ignored when introducing it in a more general and broader sense of 'relationships'. For an excellent examination of the problem and properties of social capital and its intellectual history, see Woolcock (1998).

[5] Social capital in fact has its roots in European social theory and in particular Bourdieu's work. A comparison between different perspectives towards social capital between Bourdieu and his American counterparts, and how this is connected with his notion of cultural capital will be discussed in detail below.

[6] Nevertheless it can be a danger of oversimplification in overlooking the importance of the *form* of parental involvement in favour of the *extent* of it. In fact what I am trying to do here is to review (particularly) Putnam's social capital theory coupled with the examples he provided rather than display my own arguments which appear below, or exhaust different forms of social capital in relation to education.

(vertical) (Putnam 2000:22-23, Woolcock 2001:13).[7] Bonding social capital refers to a social connection that tends to stress the identity of a group which is constituted in an inward and homogeneous way, and potentially excludes others who are external to it. In other words, it bolsters narrower selves and in-groups loyalty, and may also create out-group antagonism. Bridging social capital refers to a form of social networking that includes people across diverse social cleavages, and 'can generate broader identities and reciprocity'(Putnam 2000:23). Linking social capital, unlike bridging capital that functions horizontally, connects groups or individuals to others in different social positions, e.g. more powerful or socially advantaged, and hence refers to a vertical network. It is a linkage to *formal institutions* from which resources, ideas and information can be leveraged (Putnam 2000, Woolcock 2001, NESF 2003).

Different combinations of bonding, bridging and linking social capital are responsible for the variety of outcomes for different cultural groups (Woolcock 2001, NESF 2003). A desirable social capital combination is therefore a healthy balance between, or optimal combination of, its differential dimensions. Too much bonding capital and too little bridging capital stifle and restrict personal initiative and innovation within the group while at the same time it is likely to invite exclusion of those outside the group. Too much bridging and too little bonding will leave individuals personally vulnerable. Meanwhile, a lack of linking capital can leave certain social groups on the periphery of the centre of power, which will significantly undermine their rights and opportunities for realisation of their interests. Worse than this, marginalised groups will be exposed 'to continuing marginalisation and disempowerment' when they are dispossessed from both linking and bridging capitals (NESF 2003:34). In short, whilst social capital can be mobilised to empower communities, it can also play a negative role.

Bonding social capital exists within a community and is thus inward, bridging is between communities and linking is beyond communities, and so outward

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[7] The terms of 'bonding' and 'bridging' are not originally coined by Putnam; 'linking' is by Woolcock despite the fact that the idea is in part inspired by others' work. See Putnam (2000) and Woolcock (2001) for details.

(Putnam 2000, Woolcock 2001, NESF 2003). Linking capital is a form of social connection between *formal institutions* and *communities* (and community members), and thus requires a connection beyond communities per se, either within or between. In this light, when there also exist gaps between distinctive subgroups in terms of class, gender, etc. within a community, it is necessary to distinguish personal connections of some individuals in a particular community with other communities or formal institutions from the collective connections of the community with other communities or formal institutions. In other words, although in everyday language it makes sense that an individual from a certain community is said to have bridging or linking social capital because she or he possesses relationships with other communities or institutions, it runs the risk of taking this individually based capital as the collectively based capital of the community as a whole.

The need to make these distinctions is embedded in the understanding of the key elements on which social capital is built up: mutual knowledge and recognition. When some individuals possess outward capital, it does not necessarily mean that the community these individuals are from is understood and recognised by other communities or formal institutions as a whole. By the same token, when members of a community have achieved social mobility with the help of the fellow members (in advantaged or powerful social positions or otherwise), if the community as a whole is not recognised by other communities or institutions, members' success is still individual rather than collective. Min Zhou's study can be taken as an illustration of this kind of story in which the Chinese community is among the marginalised though individual successes seem to be growing, usually from the younger generation, who have achieved success both in schools and in the wider society. In other words, the Chinese community as a whole cannot be regarded as possessing linking social capital to formal institutions. This is also the reason why there is a need to mobilise community resources to help its members achieve social mobility – this is rarely the case among the dominant white ethnic population. Similar stories about the imbalance between successful schooling of ethnic minority populations and the marginalised socio-economic status of their communities have been widely reported across the Atlantic. (East) Asians in the

US and Chinese and Indians in the UK are two examples.[8] In short, social capital should be taken as 'the collectivity-owned capital', which is 'a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu 1986:51). This is where Bourdieu distinctively stands in his social capital theory when compared to more positivistic interpretations.

Capital, culture and power relations

With their similar interest in the notion of social capital, there is a tension between the positivistic approach and Bourdieuian approach. The positivistic tradition, which is mainly North American, tends to emphasise the possibility that marginalised groups can mobilise their (inward) social resources/capital to overcome exclusion so as to forge access to institutions (Min Zhou 2005; Putnam 2000; Woolcock 2001:14). This is probably true in the American case in which the state largely leaves civil society alone, i.e. makes little intervention into civil society so that citizens, in theory at least, can prosper rather freely. The state promotes a radical philosophy of individualism, i.e. advocates individual endeavours so long as it will lead individuals to success in a free market economy – what is widely known as 'the American dream'. This is also why this approach is labelled as 'neo-liberal' in some research (see SARDONS 2001:8). In this light, social capital is largely understood as bonding social capital or individually owned outward capital. However, In employing the notion of inward social capital as an analytical tool, we need to be cautious about the distinction between *possession* of social capital and *mobilisation* of it in the first place, or between what social capital *is* and what it *does*, in Woolcock's sensible observation (Woolcock 2001:13).

Whereas every community in theory possesses inward capital, what makes communities distinctive in socio-economic status is whether or not every community mobilises it equally. In the cases of dominant groups and dominated communities, the former are rarely in need of mobilisation of their bonding capital while it is quite often the case with the latter, as Zhou illustrated in her

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[8] See for example 'Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market', in which it is reported that in the UK 'even those enjoying relative success, such as the Indians and Chinese – are not doing as well as they should be, given their education and other characteristics' (Strategy Unit 2003). Also see Woo (2002) for the Asian example in the USA.

Chinese community case. In other words, the fundamental difference between dominant groups and dominated communities in terms of social capital lies in whether or not a community needs to mobilise its bonding social capital. This need to mobilise inward capital is in fact a compensation for the lack of outward capital, bridging and/or linking. Therefore, the mobilisation of bonding capital is a reflection of imbalanced power relations between the dominant group and dominated communities. Linking capital, as the institution-related form of outward capital, is more responsible for the different roles distinctive communities play in power relations.

When a community predominantly possesses linking social capital, this means that it constitutes the core part of formal institutions, which ensures that it has substantially accessed formal institutions. This will enable the community to become the legitimate player over the other communities. In this condition, its inward social capital substantially overlaps with its linking social capital, and in mobilising its linking capital in fact the community is also mobilising its bonding capital. The two forms of capital are interlocked and sustain each other so that the dominant group does not need to specifically, particularly or separately mobilise its bonding capital alone. One of the main results in playing this role is to institutionalise its own cultural heritage as capital, as Bourdieu observes. This is quite the reverse with dominated groups, who are deprived of outward social capital and forced to mobilise inward social capital. This is why Bourdieuian theorists, or neo-Marxists,[9] unlike positivists who tend to take inward capital as an analytical basis, are more likely to pay close attention to outward capital in general, and linking or vertical capital in particular. As differential forms of social capital function so differently in relation to the socio-economic status of various communities, it is necessary to disaggregate the package of social capital, and at the same time to ensure that social capital is not reduced to solely one of its dimensions, inward capital.

The need and significance of unpacking but not reducing the thesis of social capital is fundamentally grounded in mutual acquaintance and recognition within

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[9] The two terms 'neo-Marxist' and 'neo-liberal(ist)' are employed by Davies. See SARDONS 2001:8.

a community and between different communities, upon which social capital is premised. Whereas mutual knowledge and recognition are relatively easy to achieve *within* a cultural community, owing to shared cultural norms or values, they are not as easy to achieve *between* cultural communities. Dominated groups, in order to achieve such mutuality, have in the first instance to acquire the mainstream culture of the dominant group, i.e. cultural capital, regardless of whether or not the mutuality is eventually achievable. This mutuality-oriented acquisition aims to empower dominated groups themselves through establishing connections with formal institutions, and achieve the goal of putting them on an equal footing with the dominant group.

In this light, the ideal pattern for dominated groups is to both keep their own cultural heritage and acquire institutionalised culture or cultural capital – additive learning from Ogbu's perspective (Ogbu 1987; Gibson 1988; Ogbu and Simons 1997). In reality the situation is quite the reverse however. The acquisition of the mainstream culture is very likely to lead the dominated to subordination to the dominant cultural group. When dominated groups acquire cultural capital, it implies that their own culture is less valuable or inferior and useless, which inevitably further leads to a devaluation of the symbolic image of the ownership of the culture, i.e. the community, in society. In acquiring cultural capital, subordinated cultural groups are also at risk of being distanced from their own culture, and at worst, of losing contact with it. Acquisition of cultural capital is thus likely to occur at the cost of subordinated groups' cultures and symbolic image, and put them in a vulnerable or even diminishing position. In other words, the acquisition of the mainstream culture cannot bring in a legitimated status for marginalised cultures and communities, and can make matters worse, in the sense that they will be put into a more peripheral position. On the other hand, this result has the objective effect of helping to strengthen the hegemony of the dominant cultural group and forming a reproducibility circle for the institutionalised dominant culture, the essence of the social system. This is where Bourdieu (and I) become cynical. In this light, the success of some individuals from dominated groups can, to some extent, help their communities and members build up certain linkage with formal institutions, but it can rarely transform their dominated position or devalued symbolic image in relation to the dominant one as a whole.

All of this suggests the difficulty of changing the marginalised status of certain cultural groups even if they possess both cultural capital and inward social capital but lack outward (particularly vertical) social capital. At the same time, the 'losers' in schooling due to a lack of cultural capital or positive inward social capital (community forces) – either because their communities possess inconsistent cultural heritages with the mainstream or because they resist the dominant group and its culture as a strategy of self-protection or self-defence – could also be used by some policy-makers or academic commentators as an example in comparison to the 'winners' 'to reinforce the idea that race and intelligence are linked, not genetically but culturally' (Noguera 2004:182). In this sense, positivistic social capital theory has not fundamentally transcended Ogbu's community forces approach but in fact fallen into the similar stereotyping of ethnic minorities to the latter as pointed out earlier.[10] In other words, what fundamentally needs to be transformed is power *relations* as a whole, in both an instrumental (socio-economic) and symbolic (cultural) sense. To achieve this, it is inadequate (if necessary) for marginalised groups to empower themselves only with the given cultural capital and bonding social capital. This will otherwise still render them in a position of second-class citizens as a result of being passive acceptors of the social system, which is typically embodied in the existing and reproducible cultural capital mechanism.[11]

In the light of these unequal power relations, even if subordinated group members possess cultural capital and bonding social capital, they are likely to be turned into 'involuntary' school learners, and, further, poor school performers, due to a lack of a foreseeable promising future as a result of lacking outward social capital. Meanwhile, those who have succeeded in schooling in acquiring cultural capital

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[10] Compared to the domination of the positivistic approach to social capital theory which is highlighted in the World Bank's use of the concept recently, the approach from a Bourdieuian perspective is much less popular so cannot be taken as the 'representative' of the theory. This is not to say that the boundary between the two approaches is clear-cut – the notion of linking capital that is more associated with power relations has actually emerged from the World Bank discourse. However this is still difficult to change the positivistic preference of the World Bank.

[11] In his email on 26 April 2004, Leon Tikly wrote: 'Gramsci is one of the theorists most associated with the role of education in the struggle by sub-altern groups to challenge the hegemony (intellectual and cultural leadership) of dominant groups through constructing a counter hegemony.' Leon then made a very important point that supports my review of cultural capital and power relations here: 'In fact, Gramsci's prescriptions for this were quite conservative. He believed that sub-altern groups needed to master existing hegemonic forms of knowledge if they, in their turn were to harness this knowledge to their own struggle.'

and/or mobilising bonding social capital have paid a higher price. In other words, they 'could do significantly better and enjoy their education much more were the barriers to their success eliminated or reduced' (Gibson 1988:167). As a result, it is unlikely that marginalised groups could achieve the goal of empowerment merely through mobilising their bonding social capital but without a top-down programme and action from formal institutions, which is manipulated by the dominant group elites. This programme will help them build up bridging and linking social capital as a group so as to help them overcome barriers that preclude them from accessing social resources beyond their communities, in particular institutional resources. Pessimistically, this goal seems hardly to be achieved when confronting the reality in which power elites from the dominant group in formal institutions exploit social capital to achieve their ends at the expense of the interests of other social groups (Putnam 2000:22). In other words, social capital can be, and actually is, exploited by power elites as a tool to exclude other groups in order to maintain their dominant status.[12] Thus dominated groups will undoubtedly remain deprived of better socio-economic status as a result of their lack of outward social capital on the one hand, and on the other hand, their capability to build up connections with other social groups, particularly with the dominant group, will be undermined.

Having so argued, it is doubtful that a top-down programme that is expected to help empower the dominated will automatically come to exist in due course. This initiative needs to be driven by a bottom-up resistance and fight against the imbalance sustained and reinforced by the existing system in the first place. In so doing, 'culture' or 'cultural differences' are usually employed by marginalised cultural groups, ethnic, class or otherwise, as the main tool to avoid being (further) disempowered and to demand social rights for equality. This is not surprising given the fact that it is cultural capital, a key embodiment or form of the dominant hegemony, that divides people into different ranks. This is not only a class culture division, but also a gender culture division, an ethnic culture

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[12] Based upon the work of Bourdieu, Woolcock and Philips, NESF provides a succinct description of how those who are economically powerful easily gain cultural and social capitals, through which they are best positioned to exercise political power (2003).

division, and so forth.[13] Marginalised groups' adoption of culture as the main tool is hence a concern with power relations that aims to forge a counter hegemonic strategy. In other words, marginalised groups intend to take culture as 'strategies of action' through drawing on 'many tacit assumptions from the existing culture' to shape a repertoire or 'tool kit' (Swidler 1986). In this vein, both 'action *and* values are organized to take advantage of cultural competences' (ibid.:275). This forms a culture war.

This is why marginalised group members, and actually in particular those successful individuals from marginalised groups, still insist on the importance of their allegedly distinctive cultural heritage and identity even though they are equipped with plenty of cultural capital. What they aim to achieve in their assertion of difference is not the acquisition of cultural capital (if they are willing to 'equip' themselves with the dominant culture), but rather, an appropriate social status in relation to other social groups in general, and the dominant group in particular. This reflects their desire for more outward, in particular vertical, social capital that is believed to be achievable by making some fundamental changes to power relations in order to provide them with a relationship of mutual knowledge and recognition with the dominant social group. This is in the end not a version of acquisition of the dominant culture in the name of mutuality, but rather, a (re)negotiated version between the dominant and other cultures. With this (re)negotiation, cultural capital is expectedly transformed to a new landscape, which is justly combined by both dominating and dominated cultures. Subordinated groups would otherwise still face barriers that are very likely to block their access to economic and other opportunities even if they possess plenty of cultural capital, which in theory enables them to achieve highly in schooling, and further to achieve upward social mobility in the wider society.

Conclusion

When setting up the system in opposition with community forces in his cultural-ecological framework, Ogbu has in fact singled out the system as pointed out earlier. In other words, his framework is largely about community forces alone

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[13] Skeggs (1997) gives an excellent illustration of the way in which class and gender are intertwined. On the entanglement of race/ethnicity and class, see Fenton and Bradley (2002).

rather than interaction between the system and ethnic minority communities. Community forces are used to refer to minorities' interpretations of and responses to the system, so are psychological factors. That is to say, Ogbu does not look at power *relations* but focuses on disadvantaged groups' *perceptions* of power relations. In this sense, it is impossible to see *evidenced* minority educational and occupational attainments, by which we can tell whether or not minorities are disadvantaged systematically and so are disempowered, or to what extent they are disadvantaged or disempowered. This is not necessarily identical in all cases with their perceptions of the system. In this light, voluntary minorities may be *forced* voluntary communities and so are actually involuntary, given the fact that they have been aware that they cannot afford to turn back (to Asia, for example), so have to brace themselves to get ahead in the host society. This means that their high achievement in both schools and the larger society is not a result from disregarding themselves as opposed to the dominant group, but a choice without alternatives. In other words, their achievement is not on account of racism lessening in society.[14]

That is very likely why Asian American immigrant parents tend to tell their children of their immense sacrifice to move to the US, which usually leads to guilt and obligations felt by these youths, and then results in these children's hard work in schools (Kao 2004, Zhou 2005). In the meantime, some involuntary minorities have more leeway owing to the fact that they are 'locals' in society (American Indians or African Americans). Interestingly, some other 'voluntary' minorities tend to perform reluctantly and have achievement that is lower than average in schooling, for example Hispanics in the USA. They are affected by a certain specific type of integration into American society, which is characterised by a long-established pattern of labour migration, and/or by sets of social relations that are associated with a large and visible US-born Hispanic culture (Bankston 2004).

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[14] This also associated, for example, with the Chinese cultural norm that prioritises education as argued in chapter four. However we must be very cautious when speaking about culture in this way in that we must avoid superficially labelling different cultural norms as positive or negative forces in educational performance of different groups before exploring what underlines the different cultural norms in different (historical) contexts. This is especially necessary in our attempt to deconstruct universalism that is characterised by the West dominated globalisation and the related package of cultural norms. For further information, see Hoogvelt (2001) and Parekh (2000).

In other words, they also possess a kind of leeway. In this light, voluntary minorities' choice of withdrawal from schooling (so with poor school performance) can also be understood as a voluntary decision or strategy but is not a result of involuntariness. Ogbu's in/voluntary distinction hence easily causes (linguistic) confusion and so is misleading.

On the contrary, Bourdieu primarily lends space to explanations of the way in which formal institutions of the system work on different classes. For him, cultural capital is actually a result of social capital structure, in which the dominant group has institutionalised and capitalised its cultural heritage by exploiting the linking social capital it predominantly possesses. Human agency is largely invisible in the cultural capital theory. This is most likely because Bourdieu feels cynical about what the disadvantaged human agency could do about the social system of imbalanced power relations, and as a result he disregards the possibility of what human agency might be able to achieve here. This is perhaps why he is criticised as being inadequate in evidence (Sullivan 2001). Relately, Bourdieu does not look at interactions between the system and the disadvantaged in particular at a concrete level as Ogbu does. However, his theory has disclosed a fundamental fact associated with imbalanced power relations of the social mechanism.

The theory that has explicitly tackled interaction issues is that of social capital (of which Bourdieu is one of the founders). Unfortunately this thesis is reducibly understood by many of its theorists as bonding social capital alone, and so applied in their research. The consequence caused by this simplified version of social capital is that mobilisation of bonding social capital is not a compensatory strategy towards the lack of linking social capital. Rather, it is taken as separate and spontaneous community forces that have little to do with outward social capital, where power relations in the social mechanism are located. In other words, these studies 'focus on the conceptualisation of social capital as norms rather than access to institutional resources' (Dika and Singh 2002:43). This approach runs the risk of implying that bonding social capital should be primarily responsible for upward social mobility of ethnic minority communities.

Fundamentally, in attempting to identify social forces that facilitate or block minority school performance, cultural capital theorists tend to remain in an explanatory position with a pessimistic view towards seeking a remedy while (bonding) social capital theorists hold a prescriptive perspective which is based upon their more positive point of view regarding the possibility of upward social mobility of disadvantaged communities. In other words, cultural capital theorists can also be identified as vertical social capital theorists, both putting a premium on (oppositional) power relations between the disadvantaged and the social system. Bourdicu plays these two roles in his cultural and social capital theories by explicitly pointing out that social capital is collectively-based capital, and that disadvantaged communities as a whole lack access to resources in formal institutions, which is interlocked with their lack of cultural capital. On the contrary, bonding social capital theorists pay close attention to mobilisation of capital. In terms of school performance, for Bourdieu and his followers, the social system is fundamentally responsible for minority (or working class) children's failure whereas bonding social capital theorists, when emphasising the role disadvantaged communities play in 'making it', (un)intentionally shift responsibility to disadvantaged communities themselves. This is the fundamental fracture between Bourdieuian theorists and their positivistic counterparts.[15]

As a whole, Ogbu's overlooking of the system, Bourdieu's relative blindness to human agency and many social capital theorists' ignoring of the outward dimension of social capital (as power relations), have all contributed to an inadequacy in theory and methodology. In light of this, my own theoretical framework is grounded in the concept of power relations that focuses on interaction between the social system and ethnic communities. This interactive perspective is both vertical and horizontal in that it entails the interaction between

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[15] By the same token, the cultural discontinuity of certain groups is not as simple as the term implies. It is actually caused by the fact that the cultures of these groups have not been capitalised, institutionalised or legitimised while the dominant culture has been. Whereas Bourdieuian theorists are observing power relations when putting forward the cultural capital theory, their counterparts are diverging from (the basis of his framework, in Ogbu's case) power relations, by simplifying and so overlooking cultural discontinuity. *Cultural discontinuity* as a result of lacking cultural capital is in fact a form of *social discontinuity* as a result of lacking outward social capital so is a result of imbalanced power relations. Cultural discontinuity explanations therefore cannot be replaced by community forces approach as an analytical basis, just as outward social capital cannot be displaced by bonding social capital as an analytical tool.

social system and ethnic communities on the one hand, and on the other, engages with that between different ethnic communities, i.e. between the majority and minority communities, and between minority communities. Therefore this is a multi-dimensional approach that examines both the macro politics of the historical and policy backgrounds and the micro politics of schooling in relation to ethnic minorities. Bringing together the different levels and dimensions, the research looks into the forms of cultural exclusion experienced by ethnic minorities in the Chinese educational system, and suggests the new direction in which an inclusive policy could be developed. Therefore, in chapters four and five I conduct an historical investigation of Chinese culturalism that assumes the superiority of Chinese Han culture, and a critical policy and discourse analysis. Against this historical and policy/discourse backdrop, chapters six, seven and eight focus directly on the relationship between educational performance and ethnicity through looking at how community forces towards schooling have been shaped by the cultural and social capital of ethnic minorities (in this case, Muslims and Tibetans), and which is ingrained in power relations between the social system (which is in particular delineated in chapters four and five) and ethnic minorities, and between different ethnic communities.

Chapter Three

Research Approach and Fieldwork

Introduction

My research is interested in the varied experiences of ethnic minorities of cultural exclusion, and the social exclusion that is interlocked with the former in contemporary China. It particularly focuses on an examination of how the cultural groups at the periphery of, or excluded from mainstream institutions, both historically and at present, perceive, react and respond to a highly standardised social system of education. Therefore two dimensions are in particular need of paying close attention to in data collection and analysis, namely the interactive and comparative dimensions. The former refers to an interactive perspective that looks into not only the ways in which different ethnic groups interact with one another at the micro level, but also the ways in which ethnic minorities interact with the social system at the macro level. The latter aims to explore similarities and differences in ethnic minorities' experiences of cultural exclusion that are affected by the social system, and relatedly, by interethnic relations. Therefore, this study adopts a qualitative approach.

Nevertheless, a qualitative approach does not mean to exclude a quantitative approach, nor does it necessarily appear to be incompatible with the latter. In fact, my qualitative approach is supported by statistics in different chapters where necessary. The most important reason for me to adopt a qualitative approach lies in my intention to decipher the meaning that hides behind variation in the educational performance of different ethnic groups in general, and that of different sub-groups or individuals of ethnic minorities from different socio-economic backgrounds in particular. In doing so, I hope to establish a dominant pattern of explanation that is based on numbers or surveys in the first instance, and further, on the meanings behind these numbers or surveys.[1] In order to map

[1] Beyond these two approaches, a third paradigm of critical theory advocates action that largely aims to transform social inequality instead of merely understanding or interpreting it. Although

out a grand background that serves as one dimension of a triangulation approach, I shall conduct an historical review and critical policy and discourse analysis in chapters four and five. The empirical studies in chapters six, seven (focusing on ethnic minorities) and eight (focusing on the majority Han) will complement the macro approach and together complete the triangulation research. In the following sections of the chapter, I will explain my research approach, fieldwork and reflection on fieldwork.

An interactive and comparative approach

Interactive perspective

In his 'The Predicament of Culture', James Clifford asks: 'what if identity is conceived not as [a] boundary to be maintained but as a nexus of relations and transactions actively engaging a subject?' He then concludes that '[t]he story or stories of interaction must then be more complex, less linear and teleological' (cited in White 1991:ix). In this light, White (1991) has developed a methodology that he calls 'middle ground', a place in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and locals (ibid.:x). On his middle ground, diverse peoples adjust their differences which make up 'a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings' (ibid.). As a result, different peoples remain identifiable while they learn about or absorb each other culturally.

Interaction based on power relations between different social forces is crucially important as Ogbu argues (1987, 1998). However, unlike Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory, my attention will not be only paid to community forces (see chapter two). Rather, I will investigate interaction between the state and ethnic minority communities as well as between different ethnic groups. This is not only an investigation of several separate interactions, but will also be an attempt to construct a multi-dimensional interaction 'net'. By doing so, we can see how, for example, the positive or negative interaction between different ethnic groups, including that between different ethnic minority groups in the region, is entangled with national ideology that, for instance, relates to social evolution theory (see, particularly, chapter five); or whether Han people homogeneously voice the

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this is not an approach directly related to this research, interested readers can find some observations in chapter nine.

state's ideology that, for example, regards religion as more negative than positive in terms of social progress (see chapters five and eight). The interaction between different ethnic groups is particularly important for my comparative studies that are illustrated below. This requires locating my study of interaction at a local level where different ethnic groups regularly encounter each other in the normal course of life, which matters greatly to their daily life and also shapes their perception of each other and formal institutions (Parekh 2000:212).

To do research at this level permits a substantive picture of social networks in which individuals as members of different ethnic groups interact with each other and with state sectors, as well as with fellow members of their ethnic group. This is ideal for me to closely observe how three forms of the social capital, namely, bonding, bridging and linking (see chapter two) that ethnic minorities possess, have existed and changed. Further, a local level approach will also enhance the reliability of my research by reducing the potential arbitrariness which can result from selecting cases from geographically isolated areas, where there may not be any inherent association between the selected cases. However, to pinpoint a certain region as the only source of fieldwork data can also risk losing a broader view of diverse local contexts on which a comprehensive picture can be drawn. In other words, one context-specific case study should be, ideally, complemented with other context-specific case studies so as to avoid generalisation without sufficient evidence and at the same time to enhance representativeness. However, representativeness is not equivalent to generalisation and I shall consider how representativeness can be understood in 'reflection on fieldwork' later on.

I located my research in the borderlands between Qinghai and Gansu provinces (see the Map of China and the Map of the Ethnic Composition on the Qinghai-Gansu Borderlands, pages 278 and 279), a 'middle ground' that links China proper (*neidi*, lit. the interior, inland) to Turkic Muslims in the far northwest Xinjiang, to Tibetans in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau in the southwest, and to Mongolians in the northeast. The region is a nexus where several different ethnic groups have lived for seven or eight centuries, respectively identified with Buddhism (the Tibetan, Mongolian, Tu), Islam (the Hui, Salar, Bonan, Dongxiang) and Confucianism and atheism (mainly among the Han). In other

words, this is a frontier where the two main minority cultures that centre on Buddhism and Islam encounter each other, as well as confront the Chinese Han secular culture. This area is different from the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), Xinjiang, or East China, where there is less complicated mixture of cultural diversity on the same massive scale, as opposed to domination by, respectively, Buddhism, Islam, or atheism/Confucianism.

The borderlands between Qinghai and Gansu provinces are a hub of agricultural, pastoral and urban populations, revealing different socio-economic patterns. This allows people in this area to have the opportunity to be in contact with different social or economic groups, and to develop open perspectives and aspirations about their socio-economic status and future prospects which collide with their cultural traditions. This is very different from the ethnic minorities in remote or difficult-to-access areas, where they are usually isolated from the rest of China and live a life with few frames of reference beyond the local and few opportunities for social mobility. This is also a buffer zone between the central government and the two politically sensitive regions, TAR and Xinjiang. For the government, it is arguably a testing ground to pilot its minority policies (*minzu zhengce)* and strategies, and to nurture a role model for TAR and Xinjiang along the lines of the state's agenda of integrating ethnic minorities into the Chinese nation in terms of economy, culture and ideology.[2]

Comparative perspective

Comparative studies are carried out between different ethnic groups in a mainstream school, and between different subgroups (rural and urban) respectively from a mainstream school and a minority school. Comparison will tackle the issues of achievement, perception and aspiration.

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[2] The eminent sociologist Fei Xiaotong puts forward the idea of '*liang nan xing zang*' (prosper Tibet under the impact of two 'nans' (prefectures) which are located in the borderland areas between Qinghai and Gansu). This is the idea of integrating Tibet into the rest of China economically, and also culturally and politically by moving the Tibetan centre from Lasa to the *Liangnan* area. However, whilst Gannan prefecture in Gansu is agreed on by all researchers as one of the two 'nans', the other prefecture appears differently in different accounts or quotations: Sunan in Gansu (Fei Xiaotong 1998), Huangnan in Qinghai (Ma Rong 1996:503), or Hainan in Qinghai (XKT). Nevertheless, all three prefectures are located in the borderland areas. Also see chapter five for a further discussion of state agenda of integration.

I chose Tibetans and Muslim Hui, Bonan and Salar as my research subjects. This is because they provide the best sample of the ethnic minority issue in terms of cultural profile, political role and socio-economic status. In other words, the coexistence of Tibetans and Muslims within the same geographic location makes it an apposite site for a comparative study of the various experiences ethnic minorities have of cultural exclusion.

It is necessary to say a few words about Muslims in China before comparing them with Tibetans. There are ten officially recognized ethnic minority groups who adhere to Islam in China, which can be basically divided into two blocs, those mainly residing in Xinjiang (Kazak, Kirgiz, Tajik, Tatar, Uygur and Uzbek) and those across all China but especially in the Gansu-Ningxia-Qinghai (GNQ) borderland areas (Bonan, Dongxiang, Hui and Salar). Unlike the former, who are indigenous to Xinjiang, the latter are mainly the descendants of local people and of Muslims who migrated to China from the Middle East or Central Asia between the seventh and fourteenth centuries for business reasons or in the wake of war. This difference helps foster different ethnic identifications among, for instance, Uygur and Hui,[3] the largest groups in the two blocs. Academically (linguistically), Muslims in the Xinjiang are labelled as *Turkic and Indo-European Muslim* while the Hui are known as *Chinese Muslim*. In this study, 'Muslim' refers to the GNQ bloc ('the GNQ Muslims' hereafter unless indicated otherwise).[4]

Tibetans and the GNQ Muslims are respectively among the most important representatives of Buddhist and Islamic ethnic groups in China. While Tibetans are the core of Tibetan Buddhism, Muslim Hui are the only minority group defined along the lines of religion,[5] and are among the largest Muslim groups.

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[3] See chapter four for more information about Hui identification.
[4] My study does not include Dongxiang Muslims simply because I conducted fieldwork on the Qinghai side of the borderland areas whereas Dongxiang are primarily concentrated on the Gansu side.
[5] Both Gladney and Mackerras consider that ethnicity plays more important role than religion in the Hui identity whereas Israeli holds the view in favour of religion (Mackerras 2005). This is, as Mackerras suggests, an issue that is not clear-cut. However, what is in need of distinguishing first here is the difference of identification between the government and the Hui. Second, it is also very important to break the Hui community down as context-specific sub-groups (which Mackerras also agrees on), e.g. those in China proper and those on Qinghai-Gansu borderlands. This is not the focus of my study although I hope my empirical study of the Hui (chapter seven) will add some valuable points to the debate.

The GNQ Muslims have a different political image from Tibetans or their Turkic Muslim counterparts. Both of the latter are internationally politicised as a result of attracting political attention from the international community such as the USA, EU or some international organisations, and correspondingly receive similar attention in state policy, while this applies much less in the case of the GNQ Muslims.

The GNQ Muslims are mainly Chinese speakers, which draws a clear-cut line between this bloc and most other minority groups who have their own language and even script, e.g. Tibetans and Mongols.[6] This difference is significant in minority education and identity construction in terms of communication and socialisation in the wider Chinese Han cultural context. In other words, the GNQ Muslims are different from Tibetans and Turkic Muslims in the sense that the latter are among the least sinicised, which is partially attributable to their different linguistic backgrounds. Culture-wise, as I will argue in the remaining chapters – in particular in chapter eight – it is relatively easy for the mainstream Han to recognise or even identify themselves with (Tibetan) Buddhism on account of the age-long impact of Buddhism on Chinese culture (which in turn led to the sinicisation of Buddhism in Chinese history). In the meantime, Chinese Han feel distant from Islam and vice versa. This is particularly true in the northwest where Muslims are concentrated and largely maintain their tradition.

Further, the Hui, the largest Muslim group in China, are distributed in all walks of life across the country, ranging from politicians to intellectuals, from public servants to self-employed businesspeople, from manual workers to farmers. Most Tibetans, by contrast, are rural and are concentrated in the TAR and the four other provinces neighbouring TAR in West China, Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan.

Meanwhile, comparison is achieved through looking at different types of schools, in which students from different socio-economic backgrounds are respectively

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[6] This is a simplified categorisation. Actually amongst the four Muslim groups in the region, the first language of the three non-Hui groups is not Chinese. I have defined all of them as Chinese speakers because these three Muslim groups are very small in numbers (see chapter five and Table 1 on page 271), and have largely mastered Chinese. Also see Gladney (2003).

concentrated. In his theory, Ogbu (1987, 1998) does not distinguish between different types of school, e.g. mainstream schools or minority schools. In fact, in some mainstream schools, the majority population may not be from the ethnic majority group, as my investigation reveals. On the other hand, Chinese researchers of the education of ethnic minorities rarely take minority students in mainstream schools as their subjects.[7] Actually, the difference in the school choice of ethnic minorities is in accordance with their different socio-economic backgrounds, i.e. rural or urban, grassroots or elites, as my case studies show. To take this kind of information into account can help the process of discovering what has significantly affected minorities' belief and performance in schooling and their different experiences in both schools and the larger society, as portrayed in chapters six and seven, and so avoid seeing minorities as an homogeneous whole.

Therefore I chose a mainstream secondary school, the only one of its kind in the seat of the regional government, and a Tibetan minority senior secondary school. There are no minority schools for Muslims in the area, which in turn has formed the distinct experiences of Muslims and implicitly or explicitly impacted on their perception and evaluation of the educational situation in the region as a whole as I shall discuss in chapter seven.[8] However, because of the lack of direct relations between the Tibetan minority school and Muslim children, descriptions of the two schools are not provided here but in chapter six that deals with the Tibetan case.

One possible objection to my decision to compare two types of school rather than the experiences of different ethnic groups within the same type of school concerns the extent, to which the selected cases are 'comparable'. For example, opponents of my comparative approach may say that it is necessary to provide different

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[7] In my reading of Chinese literature (1994-2004) on the education of ethnic minorities, I have only found one short article dealing with minority students in mainstream schools (Huang Baobing 1997). An exception is that Tibetan students studying in inland mainstream schools have drawn academic attention. However these students are separately educated and so have limited opportunities to have contact with their Han schoolfellows. Hence both in terms of culture preservation and socialisation, their situation is more similar to that of their counterparts studying in Tibetan minority schools in minority regions. For further information see chapter six and Postiglione, Zhu and Ben (2004).

[8] There is a rich literature on separate (ethnic minority or otherwise) schools in English, either critical or supportive. Interested readers can consult chapter five, footnote 25.

students, ethnically or otherwise, with different types of school, which then can better meet students' needs or more efficiently or effectively manage the school. Correspondingly, different policies are introduced into different types of school. Therefore it is difficult to compare various types of school in, for example, student performance, school policies, and so forth. In this sense, under my primary research aim that focuses on the cultural exclusion of ethnic minorities, there might be several different understandings or interpretations of 'exclusion' by people from the same or different ethnic groups as my case studies will show. However, this can also be taken as an advantage in exploring varying experiences of different students (through their narratives/understandings). This approach hence should be understood dialectically.

Fieldwork

My fieldwork lasted four months, from February to June 2003 in Longwu Township (Longwu *Zhen*), the seat of Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province. Field settings are delineated respectively in chapters six and seven because Muslims and Tibetans are located in different settings, which are connected and interact with their distinct occupational, residential and physical mobility patterns. The fieldwork aims to turn my discussion from the macro level, which is based on the literature review in chapters two, four and five, to the micro level of interaction between different social forces, both within school site and in the local community in the region. To achieve this goal, I carried out several undertakings.[9]

Access and observations

The first undertaking is observation within classrooms, schools, governmental sectors, entertainment and commercial areas, and private houses, accompanied by field notes where possible. Working this way, I aimed to get a taste and overview of the settings where my subjects were studying, working and/or living. This work has provided me with an entry to my interviews later on with a wide range of people from both within and without school. However, observation in classrooms

[9] Questionnaires and questions for interviews are offered as appendices on pages 286-292.

encountered some difficulties that forced me to reduce the length of time I would have spent on this type of observation.

The head-teacher and the two deputy head-teachers in the mainstream school used to be the students, and later on the colleagues, of my parents some time between mid-1960s and the end of 1970s before my parents transferred back to their Han hometown. On the other hand, due to the intricate relationships between individual persons and groups that were demarcated in line with class, personality and ethnicity during the Cultural Revolution, the head-teacher did not show enthusiasm for my project despite his politeness as a sort of 'acquaintance'. Instead, he first insisted that he would definitely help if their students were not so busy with their study and activities.[10] After I implied that I may get rid of them and conduct fieldwork in minority schools instead as my research was about the education of ethnic minorities, he reluctantly but also strategically agreed that I could do research in his school with the assistance from the two deputy head-teachers, who were respectively in charge of the junior part and the senior part of the school.

After telling them my schedule, one of the deputy head-teachers introduced me to a few administrators from whom I could supposedly gain relevant figures and facts I needed about the school, the students and teachers, as well as textbooks and some official documents. In accordance with my observation guidelines, the administrators offered me all figures and facts they had, of which I verified some (with other teachers or students in person at different stages or on different occasions through my fieldwork) that I suspected were not fully reliable.

I intended to observe the final year of compulsory education (the third year in junior secondary) and the first year of the post-compulsory education (the first year in senior secondary), i.e. take the two years as my sample. This is a transitional point through which one can tell if a student (and/or her/his family)

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[10] The degree to which their students are busy with their study can be found in chapter six. In addition, 2003 was the fifth anniversary of the Prefecture, so that the prefectural government required and mobilised people in state sectors to rehearse shows for the coming celebration in July. Among these state sectors, schools were, as usual, the second most important source of human resources after the professional sectors such as the Prefectural Singing and Dancing Ensemble.

expects to finally move on to tertiary education, which reflects different aspirations among parents and/or students towards children's future. This is because I suspected that whether or not to continue the post-compulsory education is closely connected with ethnic and/or socio-economic background of students. For arranging my classroom observation, the deputy head-teacher in charge of the junior sector got in touch with the teacher in charge of Grade Three (teacher A hereafter). Although teacher A expressed her appreciation of the importance of my fieldwork for a quality research project, she kept suggesting that I do this with other grades as her students were in the last year of compulsory education and so were totally overwhelmed by their study – which was in fact also one important reason why I insisted on observing in this grade. With encouragement from the deputy head-teacher, who appreciated my reasons for choosing to study Grade Three, teacher A agreed to arrange for me to observe two classes and introduced me to the two form masters. Encouragingly, the form masters showed greater enthusiasm and curiosity towards my research.

As agreed, I arrived in the teaching building the next morning. However, I was told that a senior teacher teaching the two classes objected to my observation in classrooms. Her worry, according to teacher A, was that I would excite the students leaving them out of control after I departed. Although I said that I did not mind explaining to this teacher that I was only focusing on students' performance in classrooms owing to my research looking at the relationships between ethnicity and educational achievement, I was told that more than one teacher, 'actually almost every teacher', was unhappy with my arrangements with the school . After several discussions with the deputy head-teacher and teacher A, I was allowed to observe only one class (different to the two classes I tried approaching earlier) for 4 days (observation had originally planned for one to two weeks), and in the meantime I was expected (as a kind of 'role model') to give a lecture in the last class observation relating my biography as one of educational 'success'. In order to ensure there would not be any more changes, I insisted that I should pay a visit to all teachers teaching in this class. Most teachers were in fact very friendly and curious about my research, which enabled me to encourage them to become my interviewees at a later stage. Although I experienced some more hassles from a

very few teachers in classroom observation later on, I felt that I achieved the goal of observation.

In the following week, my observation moved on to a class in the first year of the senior or post-compulsory stage. Unexpectedly arrangements with this year group proceeded very smoothly. I got the transcripts of the students, a classroom plan with students' names filling in places by the order of their seats – which largely facilitated the accuracy of my observations of different ethnic students. As an incentive, I also agreed to give a talk of my 'successful' story as I did with the other class. Everything was arranged in the same way as that with the other class but the process went through with few problems. I also wondered if this was connected with some observable differences between the two classes. In Junior Three all teachers were stricter in disciplining students and more distant from me. This was perhaps because students had to work very hard in order to enter a (better) senior secondary school after taking regional uniform examinations in a few months' time. Further, they were also younger and arguably less sociable. The senior students (and their teachers) appeared to be more relaxed. This is perhaps because they were already successful in entering the senior class while they were also older and supposedly more sociable. So whilst the senior students appeared to be more active in approaching me, the junior ones seemed to be more introverted even during class breaks. Another reason is likely to be that the senior grade was streamed into an ordinary class and an advanced one by examination outcomes, and the class I observed was the ordinary one – which meant that they received less attention or concern from their teachers.[11] By contrast, in Junior Three, the four classes were divided evenly in terms of students' achievement. Nevertheless, four days of observation in each class proved to be quite sufficient for me to get along with the students, both 'good' or 'bad', Han or minorities. As it was arranged that I sit at the back of the classrooms where 'bad' students were usually concentrated – the majority of them were Muslim boys – both of us gained the opportunity to communicate with one another, with or without verbal language – they did not believe for quite a while that I was fluent in the local dialect.

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[11] More information can be found in chapter seven.

One thing that proved my success in getting along with both teachers and students was that they shortly started to actively chat with me when we met outside classrooms (or in classrooms). They saw me as a sort of insider from outside with whom they could speak about their personal feelings with confidence given my knowledge about the locality and my safe distance from the school official. Teachers usually complained about the quality of their students that they did not think were as good as some years ago. They also – outside classrooms – complained about the unfairness of the school policy (see chapter six), and any other things concerning them, ranging from cultural, economic gaps between western and eastern regions of China, interethnic relationships in the region, etc. Students were more interested in information about the outside world – China proper, coastal areas, abroad – as well as in my research. Using the telephone number I gave on the questionnaires (see below), students also phoned me up to invite me to watch them playing football or engaging in other activities. My inside/outside status particularly worked well with students who were usually very frank with me in communication. Nonetheless, a few teachers appeared to be quite ambivalent about whether or not or to what extent they wanted to answer my questions due to their uncertainty of the degree to which I was close to or distant from their superiors or the like, especially after they discovered that I had some sort of local 'roots'. Therefore, the approach of discursive repertoires (see below) in analysis of data was more necessary with teachers.

In accessing the Tibetan minority school, due to a lack of personal connections, I had to ask some governmental officials of the prefecture, who used to be my parents' students, for help. They introduced me to the local bureau of education where one of the deputy directors was very reluctant when she was told that I was a researcher based in the UK. We then decided to use another identity of mine – a lecturer from my home university in China. Under this guise they rang up the school and arranged for me to go there in the afternoon. I visited the school as scheduled, met with the two Han deputy head-teachers (no head-teacher at that time for some reason), a senior administrator who was Tibetan, and a Tibetan teacher who invited me to observe a class given by him so that I could disseminate questionnaires at the end of the class. In several following meetings with them, I felt that only one of the deputy head-teachers was actually in charge

of the school, who did not appear to be very keen to assist me. He usually asked the Tibetan administrator to look after me, and to give me the information needed. At the first meeting with this administrator, I felt that he was unwilling to tell me anything that (perhaps in his understanding) may not be approved by the deputy head-teacher. This situation was improved in our later meetings as we got to know each other better. However, compared to their counterparts in the mainstream school, they treated me more seriously – they showed me around their campus, and invited me to observe students doing callisthenics during the class break.

In addition, I also kept informal contacts with both school people and those from outside, e.g. hospitals, restaurants, the street, monasteries, etc. on various occasions. These observations aimed to supplement and verify what I had investigated from 'formal' fieldwork.

Questionnaires

In the last classroom observation after I told my 'successful' story (as the observed!) in the two classes in the mainstream school, I disseminated 94 questionnaires in total to students from Han and ethnic minority groups, and received 81 on the following Monday. Of these respondents, 36 were Han, 31 were Muslim, 12 were Tibetan, and 2 were from other minorities. Questionnaires aimed to collect personal information that will help in selecting samples for interviews at a later stage. Personal information ranges from their ethnicity, educational levels and occupations of their parents, languages spoken in the family to information about their siblings. At the end of the questionnaires I also asked whether or not they would like to have an interview at a later stage, and the time and place they preferred for the interview. My personal information, the primary aim of my research and information relating to the confidentiality of interviews[12] were all given at the beginning of the questionnaires. 24 out of 38 students in the junior class expressed their willingness to participate in an interview, of whom only one was Muslim boy.[13] 41 out of 43 students in the

[12] More ethical concerns in field research are provided in the section of reflection on fieldwork.

[13] Unfortunately, this only Muslim boy dropped out just before the interview. In spite of the efforts I made (rang him up a couple of times) in trying to get hold of him – a typical 'bad' model in many teachers' and students' eyes – for an interview, he never turned up as promised until after I left the field site.

senior class would have liked to have an interview. On this basis, I chose interviewees with attention paid to balance between genders, between socio-economic backgrounds and between ethnic groups. Due to the shortage of Muslim boys from the junior class, I asked the form master of another class to introduce 3 or 4 Muslim male students. As a result, an additional four male Muslims agreed to an interview and completed questionnaires beforehand.

I disseminated a further 48 questionnaires in the Tibetan minority school where 44 questionnaires were returned along with 3 invalid ones (see below). These questionnaires contained an extra set of questions excluded from the questionnaires for the mainstream school respondents. This was primarily compensation for the lack of time to interview these students (and further their parents). The majority of these families were scattered widely in difficult-to-reach rural areas. The extra questions were simplified ones that I used in interviews with the Tibetan students in the mainstream school. They included items with regard to the attitudes of their family/community towards schooling, use or learning of their ethnic language and culture, their evaluation of schooling in minority and mainstream schools, and any other issues they would like to address or ask. The three invalid questionnaires did not answer these extra questions.[14]

Interviews

The essential goal that I aimed to achieve through interviewing was to listen to ethnically differing voices on such issues as state education, school performance and perceptions of both others and self while at the same time verifying some figures or facts against government or public accounts. First of all, I conducted 51 semi-structured interviews in person with students from the mainstream school. This included 19 Han students (10 girls), 19 Muslim students (12 girls), 11 Tibetan students (5 girls) and 2 students from other ethnic groups. All interviews were conducted in the flat of a retired teacher in the mainstream school where I had lived throughout my fieldwork. Most interviews lasted around 30-40 minutes and were recorded with a Sony Walkman with permission from the interviewees.

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[14] The main approach I employ in data analysis is that of discursive repertoires that is explained in the section of reflection on fieldwork below, and in empirical and some other chapters.

With their consent, most interviews were carried out with two students at a time, and usually they were from the same ethnic group.

I further conducted 15 semi-structured or in-depth interviews with Tibetan and Muslim parents from different socio-economic backgrounds, including government officials, public servants, manual workers, self-employed people, farmers and community leaders. This type of interview aimed to explore what Ogbu places significant weight on, namely, community forces, and the ways community forces are formed and the potential impact they have on minority students. In the first place I hoped to approach minority parents through the children interviewed from the mainstream school, but this soon proved not to work well for it lacked certain kind of authority from a parental perspective. As a result, I accessed 15 parents through my own social connections. To avoid unnecessary troubles, I did not mobilise my connections with the prefectural government officials for interviews. Interviews were conducted in schools, offices, urban dwellings or farmhouses. Most interviews lasted one to two hours and were recorded with the Walkman or pencil-paper, according to informants' individual preference.

In interviewing some rural Tibetan parents who had difficulties in understanding Chinese, I invited the retired teacher I was living with to be my interpreter, who speaks the Tu language (his mother tongue), Chinese and Tibetan fluently. He is also highly interested in my research and often discussed some related issues with me, and gradually became pretty familiar with my primary research aim. This significantly promoted the effectiveness of his interpretation in interviews. In fact, this teacher was a primary informant throughout my fieldwork. I had learnt about many important and basic things in the region through semi-formal, and more often, casual chats with him on every occasion and site. It is not an exaggeration to say that he was an encyclopaedia of the local knowledge for me.

I then conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with schoolteachers or school administrators mainly from the mainstream school and a few from the minority school. All interviews were recorded with the Walkman or pencil-paper, as with the parents. This part of the work aimed to examine the ways the social system

works at a micro level by probing school policy, hidden curriculum or the mainstream group's perceptions and treatments of minority communities and students. This part of the data was analysed in conjunction with the data collected from students from the mainstream group. During this part of the work, a few teachers who originally expressed their willingness to be interviewed did not participate in the end, most possibly because they heard about my 'local roots' in the region as mentioned earlier.

Reflection on fieldwork

Research ethics is always a concern throughout fieldwork. During the fieldwork, the most difficult part was to get permission or assistance for access to organisations or peoples. As Longwu is a small township where many people knew each other, directly or otherwise, it was even more difficult to avoid being refused by potential informants who could not get along with some of my 'acquaintances' (many of these cases are a legacy of intricate interpersonal or inter-group relationships based in class, ethnicity etc. in the Cultural Revolution[15]). On the other hand, due to the political sensitivity of the subjects of my research, people connected with state sectors, in particular with governments, appeared to be more cautious in making decisions on whether or not to accept my interviews, and how to answer my questions in interviews, or with what kind of official information to provide me. This quite often made me feel guilty when I had to probe more deeply or that I had been forced to approach my subjects under guise. In fact, I found I did stir up some kind of emotion among some people or sectors when I was visiting them. Meanwhile, the ethical concern also made me feel very frustrated when being refused by some government or school officials for the reason of (imagined?) political security and, more probably, for the bureaucratic 'habitus'.

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[15] The whole country during the Cultural Revolution was encouraged and even forced to expose the reactionary minds and actions of others (as well as their own) so as to show his/her loyalty to the Party-state. Under this mobilisation from the central government, people had to draw a clear-cut line between 'us' and 'enemies', no matter what kind of personal relations one had with his/her 'enemies' – friends, relatives or colleagues. This line drawing was much influenced by differences in social, cultural or ethnic backgrounds that considerably made interpersonal and inter-group relationships complex and complicated.

Sampling is another issue that had concerned me even prior to fieldwork. In terms of sample size, I chose 19 Han and 19 Muslim students respectively that are proportionate to their populations in the whole school (37% versus 35% for the Han, and 37% versus 32% in the Muslim case). I chose 11 Tibetan students that is twice its percentage in the school population (22% versus 10%. Also see chapter six). The preference for minority students in sample selection lies in the fact that this research is concerned with minorities; further, the absolute numbers of minority students in general, Tibetans in particular, are smaller. In choosing field settings, schools, classes, and student informants, I experienced a few difficulties as mentioned earlier. For instance I had to give up the idea of interviewing Tibetan students in the Tibetan school due to time limit and difficulties in visiting their geographically distant families. Instead, I extended the questionnaires for them by adding the questions that were used in interviewing Tibetan students from the mainstream school. In the mainstream school I had also to request that some teachers introduce some Muslim boys so as to reach a balance in terms of ethnicity and gender for interviews. As a whole, student informants (from the mainstream school) were selected quite evenly in terms of ethnicity, gender, socio-economic background and educational performance that was principally based on the information collected from the questionnaires I disseminated to students as explained earlier. Teacher samples were chosen based on information I obtained from the retired teacher I was living with, the school officials and some other teachers, as well as my personal observation. Teacher interviewees were generally quite cooperative and helpful, probably because they were adult, both they and I lived in the school, and they also, to a significant degree, identified themselves with me in terms of age and socio-economic and cultural background (including most ethnic minority teachers).

The most difficult part in approaching potential informants was associated with parents as briefly mentioned above. The only way I was able to approach them was through my personal connections, i.e. through snowballing, including through my Muslim nanny and her family, the teacher I was living with, other schoolteachers and so on. In doing so, I was trying my best to keep a balance in selecting informants that were expected to be representative in ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background. This also means that sometimes, coupled by a

guilty feeling, I had to 'force' these gatekeepers to introduce someone with whom she or he was not familiar enough to arrange quite a private meeting for me. This was also because I knew I could not afford another period of fieldwork. As a result, even the small number of parents I eventually interviewed included people from a range of different socio-economic backgrounds as portrayed above.

Through personal contact (interviews or otherwise) with different kinds of people, I did find quite a few students, parents or teachers were more accessible than others. In a later reflection on my fieldwork, I became aware that these people appeared to be more informed of or more interested in what is going on in other parts of the region, of China or of the world. They held stronger views about the necessity of transforming themselves as well as their hometown whilst at the same time they were also likely to be more enthusiastic towards their ethnic heritage and identity. They were largely from higher than average level of socio-economic backgrounds. All of this kind of information is employed in my empirical studies in chapters six, seven and eight.

Nonetheless, I also found it very difficult to approach Muslims (particularly Muslim parents), regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds – and had also anticipated this would be difficult before starting fieldwork. The question I asked myself was why they rejected me or why I held this kind of feeling towards them. Certainly I am not Muslim, nor even am I local – but I am not Tibetan either. Luckily, some of my personal connections helped to smooth my access to Muslim parents. I heard the most frank, honest and saddest narratives even though I could only access them through the technique of snowballing, and had to record interviews with pencil-paper which always meant that I missed some accounts in interviews with Muslims – all of them asked me to record only with pencil-paper. Hence writing up fieldwork notes immediately after interviews became very important. Added to this encounter was and still is an understanding of the formal and informal processes of negotiating access to several different ethnic groups that significantly helped with my understanding of varying experiences of different ethno-social communities. As a result, it subtly and radically redirected my sympathy more towards Muslims rather than Tibetans, quite the reverse of my preconception of the two groups – which also led me to adjust my preconceived

themes and contributed towards the emergence of new themes. Moreover, this also made me aware of my age, gender, personality, ethnicity and socio-economic background that had together shaped my fieldwork, data analysis and writing up whilst acknowledging I am part of the world I study (O'Reilly 2005:222). Some of these factors appeared to be advantageous (e.g. my lively and empathetic personality) while others are in between or shifting in different contexts. In the end, I found that in fact there was not an element that was entirely disadvantageous throughout the fieldwork on the one hand, and on the other hand, the downside of these elements could always possibly be reduced to some extent with more patience, empathy and understanding.

I am aware that I am not entirely in the position of claiming the representativeness, or the validity and reliability, of my findings if this refers to generalisation of minority experiences in China, or even in western regions as I argued earlier. The value of my research lies in my approach of discursive repertoires in the process of data analysis (for validity), and what O'Reilly (2005:225) calls 'inferences' (for reliability). I had quite intuitively employed what I later learnt to be called the approach of discursive repertoires in data analysis before my co-supervisor Dr Leon Tikly, after reading chapter eight of my thesis, recommended Wetherell and Potter's framework of interpretative repertoires (1987, 1992). Leon's recommendation promoted my awareness of the methodology which I am attempting to theorise here. This framework of discourse analysis is a critical amendment of Michel Foucault's theoretical account of discourse that lacks interest in actual linguistic performance or social practice.

The interest Wetherell and Potter in particular hold is in the context of use and the act of discursive instantiation, which is characterised by broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech that are often assembled around metaphors or vivid images. These things can be talked of as systems of signification on the one hand, and on the other hand as the building blocks used for manufacturing versions of actions, self and social structures. This framework allows the authors to treat 'action orientation' of discourse as primary in that the situated use of text or talk is regarded as not being derived from abstract meanings of the terms used. Moreover, this focus on discourse as social practice also

enables researchers to enter everyday conversation and texts, or to enter the implementation of discourses that work together and against one another in actual settings (Wetherell and Potter 1992).

This analytical approach and ethnographic fieldwork are much on the same wavelength in that both respect the irreducibility of human experience, and acknowledge the messy nature of human life and understandings (O'Reilly 2005:226). The approach of discursive repertoires enables me to avoid oversimplifying rich and diverse human experience on the one hand, and on the other, enables research themes to emerge from substantiation. Having shared the similar interest to Wetherell and Potter, my empirical studies then consciously adopted an analytical approach of discursive repertoires to look into the course of discourse construction as readers will see in my empirical chapters, six, seven and eight.

Meanwhile, the findings emerged from my targeted groups can have inferences for or transferability to other groups. In this sense, I am particularly interested to see, for example, (compared to my field site of a Tibetan autonomous region), what the interethnic relations are like in a Muslim autonomous region in general, and in particular what kind of social capital non-Islamic minority groups in this kind of region possess in relation to public institutions or the centre of power. This is of particular interest to me because a number of Muslim autonomous administrative regions are concentrated in the Gansu-Qinghai borderland areas, the nexus of different ethnic, socio-economic and cultural groups. Presumably a case study in a Muslim region would help map out an interconnected and comparable situation of interethnic relations as a whole for the region. Reliability is also associated with another possible approach, theories. In this respect, my case studies are oriented by the critical application of Ogbu's cultural-ecological framework, the cultural and social capital theory of Bourdieu etc. and the multiculturalism thesis to investigate the cultural exclusion of ethnic minorities in the Chinese context of power relations. This approach allows me to identify areas of relevance beyond the ethnographic situation (e.g. relevance for educators and policy makers), and also enables me to bring out both the power and limits of the aforementioned theories in Western literature through the Chinese context. In so

doing, I hope to make a contribution to the theories adopted as well as leaving them open to revision and refinement with new empirical data (ibid.) as I attempt to do particularly in the previous chapter, theoretical framework.

Chapter Four

Chinese Culturalism and Its Educational Legacy: An Historical Investigation

Introduction

This chapter is an historical investigation of Chinese culturalism that is characterised by the supposed cultural superiority and universality of the Chinese Han. Central to this culturalism is the belief that China was the only true civilization and this position had remained unchallenged even under military occupation and threats of aliens due to their backwardness. This trend had lasted until the nineteenth century when China encountered both domestic crises and foreign intrusion. Further, this culturalism means that rulers must be educated and govern according to Confucian ways of universal value. This is also applicable to aliens as asserted Han cultural superiority is believed to rest on education that can potentially civilize and so legitimise non-Chinese (James Harrison 1969, cited in Townsend 1992: 98-99). Firstly, therefore, this culturalism has determined ethnic community boundaries and membership. Secondly, it has shaped the Chinese educational tradition that in turn has held up a Confucian-based elitist view at the philosophical level, and operated an examinations-guided institution – what is known as the civil service examinations of imperial China – at the technical level.

As a legacy, it has largely determined education policy and practice through the modern era of China, and relatedly, the educational experiences of ethnic minorities today although the exact form that the culturalism takes has changed over time. Changes occurred in particular in modern history when China and its civilization were seriously challenged and threatened by the West that provoked the New Culture Movement specifically directing at democracy and science within its pursuit of the European civilization (Dikötter 1992; Mitter 2004). In the meantime, the culturalism has also changed in relation to changing material conditions that is in particular evidenced by the new era of reform and opening-up of China since the late 1970s that centres on economic development.

Correspondingly, education policy with regard to ethnic minorities has kept changing whilst being grounded in the same idea of culturalism. Hence, this process can be seen as a shifting discursive (or interpretative) repertoire that draws upon a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors to characterise and evaluate actions or events (Potter and Wetherell 1987:138; also see Wetherell and Potter 1992:90 and chapter three).

Section One describes the fluidity of ethnic boundaries as the result of age-long migration throughout Chinese history. Section Two explains how Chinese Han culture, premised upon Confucianism came to be the primary criterion of distinguishing between the Han and non-Han. This involves a look at the division between different modes of production that eventually led to different types of life- style and society. Section Three examines how internal and external crises that emerged at the end of imperial China have significantly changed Chinese culturalism and imbued it with a more nationalistic sentiment. This change led the rulers of China to a re-examination of the relationship between the Han and ethnic minorities driven by a political concern whereby culturally ethnic minorities were supposedly assimilated into the Han or overlooked. In Section Four, some very recent developments in culturalism with especial reference to the West are observed. In so doing, a constant pursuit of a new confidence in Chinese culture comes to light. Section Five is an examination of how Chinese culturalism was institutionalised and reinforced through the civil service examinations of imperial China, a system that was heavily reliant upon selecting government officials not only on the basis of an assessment of the career potential of a person, but also as a means of 'discovering men of high moral character as well as of scholarly and literary attainment' (Schirokauer 1981:7). This educational tradition has eventually forged a cultural norm in Chinese society that takes education as the top priority. Drawing on the previous investigations, Section Six analyses the *wenhua* (culture) discourse of China through looking into four aspects: literacy based educational tradition, civilizing projects, the *suzhi* ((human) quality) campaign and discursive practice. Finally, Section Seven briefly depicts and evaluates the current ethos in education that has been shaped by a combined package of the culturalism, the traditional philosophy towards education, a pursuit

of economic development, and state social control, from which educational policies, practices and experiences of ethnic minorities are formulated.

The fluidity of ethnic boundaries of China

When Fei Xiaotong (1989) likens the process whereby the Han takes shape to snowballing, and Gladney (2004) unpacks the category of the Han that is widely assumed to be the equivalent of a homogeneous and monocultural 'Chinese' nation, both are actually revealing the same fact: the Han itself is always undergoing a process of re-construction from both within and without, historically and at present. So how does the boundary between the Han and non-Han groups come into being and keep changing, and what are the implications for distinguishing between the Han and non-Han groups? What follows is an historical investigation into the economic, cultural and political dynamics of this age-long boundary drawing. Some names that will be used with regard to the Han and non-Han groups are listed below just before discussion:[1]

Han: Hua, Huaxia, Nan, Qin, Song, Tang, Xia, Zhongguo, Zhonghua;
Non-Han: Dalu, Di, Fan, Hu, Li, Liao, Man, Qiang, Rong, Yi,

Han is certainly not used as a name of a people before the Han dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.) (see the Table of History Timeline on page 283). However, a group of people(s) had already been named by itself and/or out-groups that is in the first place associated to the first dynasty, Xia (2070 B.C. – 1600 B.C.), and then with certain geographically based administrative institutions (e.g. *Zhongguo*, lit. the Middle Kingdom, originally refers to the capital city). Both were located somewhere around the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River (hereafter MLYR. Also see the Maps of the Beginnings of Ancient China 1900-1300 B.C., in particular Map I, page 280) (Chen Liankai 1988). The names on the one hand served as boundaries between this group (and its territory) and other groups

[1] Strictly speaking, this is not a suitable or 'scientific' way of categorisation about group membership as I argue in the following section that the boundaries between the Han and non-Han groups are fluid. The more accountable terms may be 'the group at the centre and periphery of culturalism', the essential idea about the difference between 'Han' and 'non-Han'. However, for the reason that the term 'Han' is much more familiar to readers, I have decided to use 'Han' as the main term to reduce the complexity of the concept.

around it (for example *Yi, Di, Qian*g and *Rong*), and on the other hand were also a reflection of a gradually formulating concept of 'all under heaven' (*tianxia*) that encompassed Five Lands (*wu fang*), namely, east, west, south, north and middle (ibid.). This holistic concept of *tianxia* was actualised by the first emperor of China, *Yingzheng*, who called himself '*shi huang-(di)*' (the first emperor), when he established the first centralised empire, the Qin dynasty, in 221 B.C. The most influential policies he implemented for the empire were to bring all roads, writing systems, and weights and measures to the same standard, which largely facilitated the integration of previous states in economy, politics and culture into the empire, and more importantly, laid a firm foundation for the following empires that lasted for over two thousand years.

The Qin was followed by the Han empire, whose people were called *Qin Ren* (*Ren*, people, person) or *Zhongguo Ren* for they primarily lived in the previous Qin territory around the MLYR area. The group of people(s) was finally called *Han Ren* during the following period of the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern dynasties (220-581), a period characterised by the influx of nomadic groups from the north and northwest and the establishment of many dynasties by them. Since a number of empires particularly in the Southern and Northern dynasties that were established by nomadic groups were situated around the MLRY area, they also called themselves *Zhongguo Huangdi* (*Zhonguo* Emperor) as an expression of their willingness to share the legacy of *Zhongguo*. As a result, the name of *Zhongguo Ren* that previously referred to the group of people(s) living around the territory of the Xia and Qin dynasties was replaced by *Han Ren*, and their language was also accordingly called *Hanyu* (*Han* language). Correspondingly, all other groups were placed under a general rubric of *Fan* vis-à-vis *Han* (ibid.).

Having settled in Zhongguo, a huge number of *Fan Ren* acquired Zhongguo culture, coupled with changes of their surnames to the Han style and/or their marriage with Han people. This eventually led them to absorption into the Han group (Ebrey 1996; Fei Xiaotong 1989; Lu and Yang 2000). On the other hand, the intrusion of nomadic northerners to Zhongguo also forced a great number of previous Han people to migrate to the south where they mixed with locals. This migratory pattern of people from the north to Zhongguo and from Zhongguo to

the south has been an aspect of the whole dynastic history of China, and the two most widely known cases are those of the Yuan and Qing dynasties, respectively ruled by Mongols and Manchu. This demonstrated that Han, as the name of a group of people(s) against Fan or non-Han, is like an old bottle with new wine in it, a reflection of the fact that the boundary between Han and Fan or non-Han is always fluid. By the same token, many previous Han people were *Fanicised* after they moved to the south or other marginal areas in comparison with Zhongguo (Jia 1989b).[2] This migratory pattern is also evidenced by linguistic typology – that the Chinese language has a long continuity with the dialects of the north and northwest being much closer to Altaic compared to their counterparts in the south that remain more relics of classical Chinese (Qiaoben 1985).[3]

As a result of this fluidity of boundaries between the Han and Fan, *Han* was used quite freely in that it might include peoples from other origins, for example *Nüzhen*, *Gaoli* and *Qidan* in the Jin dynasty who were originally from the northeast, and Mongols and *Semu* (lit. coloured eyes, Muslims in the Yuan dynasty whose descendants are roughly the group that is called Hui today)[4] in the Ming dynasty (Jia 1989a:148-150). On the other hand, numerous Han people may be labelled as *Nan Ren* (Southerners) for the reason that they lived south of the MLYR area, or both Han people who moved to the south and their indigenous counterparts together (ibid.). In addition, Han people may have labelled themselves as Tang or Song people, 'descendants of the great Tang dynasty (AD 618-907) and its southern bases' (Gladney 2004:24), or descendants of the Song dynasty (960-1279) which moved its capital from the MLYR area to the south as

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[2] This moving pattern has long been thought to be the way in which civilization in East Asia spread from the MLYR area to southern and other areas. There is also another opinion that suggests, on the basis of different archaeological evidence, that East Asian culture was shaped through the path in which southern culture diffused to the north. See Qiaoben (1985:186).

[3] However, some other scholars believed that Chinese dialects in the northwest have been influenced by the Tibetan language. A very recent argument further infers that the Sino-Tibetan language family was derived from the same family as the Altaic family. Given the linguistic assumption that Chinese and Tibetan are developed from the same language family, it is too difficult to convincingly map out the relationships between Han, Tibetan and languages from the Altaic family in the region when both historical development and territory based communication between different languages need to be taken into account. Interested readers can find out more information in Alede'ertu (2004), Jin Yulan (1995), Dai Qingxia and Fu Ailan (2001).

[4] The Yuan dynasty ruled by Mongols divided its people into four caste-like groups. On the top are Mongols, followed in order by Semu, Han and Southerners (*nan ren*). However, among Southerners, a large number are actually thought to be Han today by the government and academics alike.

a consequence of being driven out by northern nomadic groups. Some of these people were identified as Han by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government in spite of their distinctive cultural and linguistic tradition compared to the present northern Han.[5]

Culture as the primary criterion in distinguishing ethnic groups in China

One interesting question with regard to ethnicity in Chinese history is why different groups, after becoming rulers in the MLRY area, all claimed their status as the Zhongguo emperor either by alleging their tie to certain ancestry in the Xia dynasty, or by actively acquiring Han culture and language, i.e. sinicising themselves, or both. In other words, if the boundary between Han and non-Han kept changing as argued above, what was the meaning of this distinction to different groups? It is necessary to trace back to the period when two types of civilization took shape around 2,000 B.C. Wang Mingke (1997) argues that the natural environment in the areas from eastern Qinghai in the northwest, through Inner Mongolia to western Liaoning in the northeast had not been very different from that to the south, i.e. the MLYR area, until 3,000 B.C. In other words, people living in what are now two different types of area, the agricultural areas of the MLRY and the nomadic areas on their margins shared a similar life style of agriculture at that time, in spite of the fact that the latter also needed to engage in some husbandry owing to a slightly different climate that precluded the lands from producing sufficient food. This similarity in the meantime also allowed them to have contact with one another quite freely. This pattern of life had not been changed until about 2,000 B.C. when the global climate was gradually becoming dry whereas at the same time the population living upon lands increased as a result of the long-term settlement that agricultural life offered. The changes made it difficult for the peoples in the marginal areas to continue largely living upon lands or agriculture as they used to do. This forced these people to raise (more) herbivorous animals that ate plants that are inedible to human beings so as to improve the sustainability of agricultural production. This also meant that they had to give up raising animals such as pigs in order to save eatable resources for human beings themselves. This transformation eventually turned their life into a

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[5] For heterogeneity within the Han group, see Gladney (2004). Also see, e.g. Friedman (2004) for a detailed investigation into a sub-group of the Han in south-eastern China.

nomadic style, involving a very different mode of production, and eventually, a different social organisation and ideology compared to those of their agricultural neighbours (ibid.).

Without doubt, one thing that most seriously concerned both peoples was redistribution of resources as populations kept growing. This caused (more) conflicts between different groups, and eventually resulted in a gradual building up of the Great Wall along the marginal areas by the MLRY peoples, from the northwest to the northeast, in the following 2,000 years. Meanwhile, backed up by agriculture, a political system of centralised dynasties characterised by complex bureaucratic institutions also emerged in the MLYR area, which was primarily maintained by corvees and taxes from peasants. This social order was in sharp contrast with what existed outside the Great Wall which was highlighted by increasing nomadicisation, mobility and militarisation.[6] More importantly, the process of division of the two types of society gradually forged a consciousness of difference between peoples, which resulted in difference in the way of naming distinctive peoples. *Hua*, *Xia* or *Zhongguo* therefore became the names of the agricultural populace while the names for (nomadic) out-groups are *Yi*, *Di*, *Rong*, *Man*, etc. many Chinese characters for the latter kind of groups with an animal radical.[7] This division is epitomised in the juxtaposition of *Hua/Yi* or *Yi/Xia*, with Yi generally referring to non-Xia, non-Hua or non-Han groups. This pair of terms is used throughout history and was not abolished until the early period of the Republic.

Indeed, this division based on the mode of production inevitably led to a political division, which further led to a cultural division that, at least at the beginning on the part of Huaxia, devalued out-groups in favour of Huaxia. This is understandable given the significance that agricultural life can have in building up a complex and institutionalised society in comparison with the type of society that

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[6] In fact, the existence of the Great Wall and the militarisation process is fundamentally associated with the issue of power as an underlying motive for reinforcing cultural difference between the Han and others.

[7] Dikötter (1992) sees this as evidence of the concept of civilization of the Chinese Han vis-à-vis ethnic minority groups. This is not necessarily true at its earliest given the fact that naming was likely to be closely associated with their nomadic life of raising certain animals such as sheep or dogs. This even could be the case with the Han. See Alede'ertu (2004).

can possibly be developed in a nomadic life.[8] Further, a nomadic life in that era meant a close tie with animals on the one hand, and on the other, inclined to militarisation. Both tendencies were thought to be the representation of primitivity or brutality vis-à-vis advance or humanity of the Huaxia, and thus 'barbarian' in the Huaxia's eyes.[9] Meanwhile, relatively less worry about a basic living standard was also more likely to enable development of a splendid life style characterised by, for example, 'gorgeous attire and rich ornaments' or sophisticated literature. As a result, the cultural dimension backed by the Confucian classics eventually came to be the most important criterion in distinguishing between Huaxia and Yi or non-Huaxia.[10] This may be partially because of the difficulty in distinguishing different people physically in the first place, and partially due to constant communication, during peace, conflict or war, between different groups, which led people from different groups to mix with one another and therefore made it more difficult to distinguish between them. Constant communication also means that Huaxia culture kept changing its elements and content under the impact of various Yi cultures whilst it was always named the same, Huaxia, Han or the like.

This fluidity left room for Yi people to become Xia and vice versa, dependent upon whether they behaved in Xia ways or Yi ways as a result of moving to Xia areas or Yi areas (Chen Liankai 1988; Xiao Jingyang 1995). The core of Xia ways is what was known as Confucianism that advocated the rule of rites and traditional morals, which supposedly could and should be acquired through learning the Four Books and Five Classics (*Sishu Wujing*), i.e. the Confucian classics.[11] In other words, Xia or Confucian ways were a set of institutions that

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[8] Wang Mingke disagrees with the assumption which suggests that the development process of civilization follows the rule of fishing-hunting → nomadic → agricultural mode, and argues that agricultural populations could also be turned 'back' to a nomadic populace as can be seen in the case of peoples living along the margins of the MLYR area between 3,000 B.C. and 2,000 B.C. (1997:114, note 17). However, it is difficult to take this change of life style as evidence to disprove the assumption of civilization development if this change inevitably occurs due to circumstances out of control of the people.

[9] This emphasis on literariness over military is also reflected in the civil service examinations of imperial China. See below.

[10] Dreyer describes Han as a people of 'silk-wearing, rice-eating and city-building' 'who considered themselves... began to create civilization that gradually overwhelmed that of their neighbours' (Dreyer 1976:283, footnote 1 for the chapter of 'The Imperial Legacy').

[11] The Four Books are: the Great Learning (*Daxue*), the Doctrine of the Mean (*Zhongyong*), the Analects of Confucius (*Lunyu*), and the Mencius (*Mengzi*); the Five Classics are: the Book of Song/Odes (*Shijing*), the Book of History (*Shujing*), the Book of Changes (*Yijing*), the Book of Rites (*Liji*), and the Spring and Autumn Annals (*Chunqiu*).

were based on the Confucian classics, and were set as the standard of culture, so were universalised cultural values. Therefore, when Confucianists did not practise the exclusion of various Yi peoples from the Xia group, this actually delivered a message that Yi could be transformed to Xia with the standard cultural values of Xia. This is why Confucius believed that Yi or *yuanren* (lit. people from afar) who did not obey or were not convinced by Xia could be attracted with (Xia) ways, i.e. its culture or morals, so as to come under control (*yuanren bu fu, ze xiu wende yi lai zhi*) (*Lunyu: jishi 16*). By the same token, when talking about rulers from different backgrounds, Yi or Xia, Mencius argued that they would be seemingly accountable so long as their behaviour accorded to Xia ways (*dezhi xinghu Zhongguo, ruo he fujie, xiansheng housheng, qi kui yi ye*) (*Mengzi: lilou 2*).[12] This method of distinguishing Yi from Xia or Hua (*huayi zhi bian*) emerged again in the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368-1644, 1644-1911), the last two imperial periods, which even brought about a protest among English traders in the nineteenth century who were resentful to be seen as Yi people by the Qing rulers. This protest led to the creation of a new name with reference to foreign countries and peoples, *Yang* (lit. ocean) (Chen Liankai 1988:103).

This concept of universal culturalism (Dikötter 1992) is also reflected in the case of *Hua*, another name of the Han that originated from a self-bragging phrase '*yiguanhuazu*' (splendidly dressed up group of people) coined by a group of Han people. This group emerged after the Eastern Han dynasty (25-225 A.D.) as the scholarship in the classics was gradually controlled by and transmitted privately in certain families. As a result, men from these families became government officials and eventually monopolised the top leadership in the government. This very high status and their related sophisticated life style won respect from Han and non-Han emperors alike, and at the same time led them to disdain other relatively poor or humble Han families. Eventually, *Hua* (or *Zhonghua*) developed into a concept with reference to the culture represented by the classics and/or the people who possess this culture, i.e. Han (Chen Liankai 1988:104). This concept of (Zhong) Hua was also applied to many other fields such as the

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[12] Baogang He (2004) also offered a similar example in which a Confucian scholar in the Yuan dynasty argued that Yi can rule China if they follows Confucianism (115). Also see Townsend (1992).

execution of law. In court, different peoples were treated differently in accordance with different customs of their groups: Zhonghua rites and morals versus the kind of customs by which one wears his hair down and folds his clothes to the left, and tattoos his body (*pifa zuoren, diaoti wenshen*) (ibid.:107-108). In a word, this is a contrast between a sophisticated life and a primitive one. This sentiment of the cultural superiority of the Han or Huaxia was summarised by a scholar in the Tang dynasty as that Zhongguo is called Xia because it possesses great propriety and righteousness (Xia also means 'large, great'), and is named Hua for its splendid clothes and literature (Hua mainly means 'splendid', 'colourful', 'beautiful') (*Zhongguo you liyi zhi da, gu cheng Xia; you fuzhang zhi mei, gu wei zhi Hua*) (shisan jing zhushu · chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi Vol. 56).[13] Ebrey also infers from the fact of many non-Chinese people claiming descent from Chinese migrants that either they wanted to believe it in looking down upon non-Han themselves or it was in their interest to do so for local politics, social prestige, or whatever (1996:23).

Correspondingly, phrases naming non-Han or non-Huaxia people were always associated with negative connotations whatever their original meaning. For instance, Fan was divided into raw and cooked (*shengfan, shufan*) by the degree of their cultural alienation as to whether they were 'savage and resisting' (raw Fan) or 'tame and submissive' (cooked Fan) (Dikötter 1992:9). The raw/cooked distinction was also applied to some other groups in the south (this is the area to which the 'raw/cooked' division is originally applied), for example *Liao* in southwest and *Li* in Hainan Island. 'Cooked' *Liao* or *Li* usually included a large proportion of Han people who migrated there from the MLYR area (Jia 1989b:169, 173). This has again demonstrated culture as a determinant of group boundaries and membership. Another phrase depicting non-Xia people that became widely used in the Qin and Han dynasties is *Hu*, which initially referred to *Hun* people (*xiongnu*) in the north, and then generally referred to people in the northwest. Among phrases with the morpheme *Hu* in modern Chinese, except for those related to such things as dancing, musical instruments, vegetables or fruits that indicate their regions of origin, most of the others describing certain kind of

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[13] The classics cited in this paragraph, *Lunyu*, *Mengzi* and *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhengyi*, are not listed in references because they are widely available in numerous versions.

behaviours are connected to 'recklessly', 'wantonly', 'outrageously', 'nonsense' in spite of the fact that *Hu* is no longer applied to any particular group of people in modern Chinese.

Culturalism under nationalistic sentiment in modern China

Dikötter (1992) rightly argues that no serious challenge was posed to universal culturalism until the nineteenth century when China encountered both internal disorder and the external intrusions of foreign countries.[14] These crises were highlighted by a reluctant reflection upon the Confucian ideology in the first place, followed by an acute attack of the imperial orthodoxy, which eventually led to an entire rejection of the Confucian legacy and the upsurge of the New Culture Movement (*xin wenhua yundong*).[15] The New Culture Movement aimed to bring 'science' and 'democracy' to China that were hoped to displace or transform Confucianism-based Chinese traditional culture. This movement initiated a 100 years' attempt by China to define its modern identity. This new tide, as Mitter puts it, of 'the introduction of new ways of thought and living, and the influx of larger numbers of foreigners than had ever been seen before, was changing China forever... at all levels of society' (Mitter 2004:69), and has underpinned 'the whole history of twentieth century of China' (Mitter 2004:4). This is the first time when Chinese culture has so fatalistically lost confidence in its superiority.

Nonetheless, in the Maoist era (1949-1976) China isolated itself from the West which suspended the tradition of the New Culture Movement. This isolation was exacerbated during the Cultural Revolution when both the Western civilization of democracy and science and Confucianism tradition were overthrown.[16] It was not until 1980s when a new cultural reflexivity that is comparable to the New Culture

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[14] The intrusion of Buddhism more than 1,500 years ago seems to be an exception. However, this cultural threat did not eliminate the superior sentiment of Chinese culture, and further, it was successfully sinicised.

[15] The New Culture Movement was triggered by and thus closely associated with the May Fourth Movement (*wusi yundong*) which occurred on the fourth of May 1919 as an 'anti-feudalism, anti-imperialism' (*fandi fanfengjian*) movement. For more information on both, see Mitter (2004).

[16] So even though it claimed to establish a new culture, the Cultural Revolution was in fact a thorough damage of all cultures, Chinese tradition, the modern Western culture and the legacy of communism. The target of this revolution therefore was expressed as *fengzixiu* (feudalism, capitalism and revisionism). In this sense, it is divorced from the New Culture Movement (and the *Heshang* phenomenon discussed in here) in that the latter reflected an attempt to *construct* a new culture by destructing some old ones rather than to merely involve (thorough and complete) destruction.

Movement occurred as a remarkable television documentary series entitled *Heshang* (River Elegy) highlighted in the summer of 1988 as a reflection on and reaction to the Maoist era. Resonating the call that their predecessors made for science and democracy some seventy years before, the authors of *Heshang* argue that China should abandon its too somnolent and peaceful inward-looking culture (ibid.:264-269) that had made its civilization wane. Instead, it should embrace the 'deep blue' (*weilan se*) of the ocean, i.e. the outward-looking, creatively destructive culture of the West (ibid.) that represents new ways of thought and living. However, Mitter warns, 'there is a dangerously primordial tone to the series' desire to see fundamental changes in the Chinese 'national character', or *suzhi*' (ibid.:267).[17]

Nevertheless, the loss of confidence in Chinese Han culture does not necessarily alter the view of the superior status of Han culture to minority cultures among Han as well as many minority members, sinicised or otherwise, let alone reflexivity regarding the proper relationship between Han culture and minority cultures. At the risk of oversimplifying, 'minorities' in here include those who were independent in some historical periods, such as Mongols, Tibetans and Uygur, as well as those who kept mixing with and melting into Han that were discussed above.[18] In spite of various relationships between the Han and different minority communities, a culturalist attitude among the 'Han' towards all other groups that were seen or defined as an ethnic minority or nationality has changed little over time.[19] *Zhonghua*, with its superior connotation to peripheral groups, was not applied to all ethnic groups within Chinese territory until the twentieth century when Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the Nationalist Party and the Republic of China, incorporated the other four ethnic groups in the *Zhongghua Minzu* (Chinese nation) after realising the limitation of merely equating *Zhonghua* with *Han* when confronting foreign (the West and Japan) intrusions. This is progress

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[17] Detailed information about the *suzhi* discourse can be found below.

[18] In discussing the complexity of the process of negotiating ethnicities, Harrell (1996) identifies three kinds of ethnic minorities in terms of Han-minority relations. Mongols and Tibetans who have some claim to historical nationhood; Utsat that have no claim on nationality but have a kind of attachment to groups outside China; Naxi, Ge and Prmi that are purely ethnic groups with no claim to nationhood.

[19] For a concise discussion of the concept of China and Chinese from a Han-minority relationships perspective, see Mackerras (2004).

compared with his earlier slogan, 'drive away *Dalu* (Manchurians, the rulers of the Qing dynasty), restore *Zhonghua* (Han China)' (*Quzhu Dalu, huifu Zhonghua*), which was displaced by the concept of 'unification of five ethnic groups (Han, Manchurian, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan)' (*wu zu gonghe*). Sun also gradually engaged with the notions of minority self-determination (*minzu zijue*) and minority autonomy (*minzu zizhi*). All of this apparently mirrored a new era of restructuring China with regard to both domestic and international affairs, as a response to the emergence of the modern nation-state that posed a threat or challenge to China in every significant way.

However, this 'progressive' idea still could not move beyond an essential concern or an ultimate goal of sinicising other ethnic groups. This is in the first place associated with Sun's perception of what placed China under threat from foreign forces. He thought that the differences of other four ethnic groups from the Han in language, territory and custom precluded their frontiers and those of China proper from integration and unification, and further, could not protect the whole country from foreign intrusion as an effect of vulnerable frontiers inhabited by these alien groups. In this light, the task of the rulers of the country is to assimilate the four minority groups into Chinese Han culture (Songben 2003:74-155). To bind the five ethnic groups together as the Chinese nation was thus a political strategy over a cultural concern, a top goal on the Republic agenda. This was the demand from the serious international climate China was facing (e.g. intrusions into Chinese borderlands by Britain, Russia and Japan), and also was underlined by and an echo of the historical concept of 'all under heaven' or Great Unity (*dayitong*) in China. [20] On the other hand, to merely refer to the five ethnic groups also reflects Sun's limitation with regard to ethnic composition in China. Sun simply took over the legacy from the Qing dynasty to whom these minority groups were vassals. Sun did not mention other ethnic minority groups in his notion of the Chinese nation. Instead, other minority populations, for example, those living in southwest, were delineated as 'assimilated' and 'lowly civilized' (ibid.).

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[20] This idea of unity was not only represented in the official ideology of dynastic and modern regimes, but also portrayed substantially in Chinese literature (see Stafford 2000) and public discourse.

This type of thinking about the ethnic composition in China was embedded in the way that Han scholars viewed ethnic minority groups in general in the early twentieth century as a result of their very limited knowledge about non-Han peoples. Correspondingly, ethnic groups were categorised by these scholars into three types, A, B and C, by the criteria of the geo-political importance of the territory where ethnic groups were located, their cultural level and disposition of intelligence (ibid.). As a result, the ethnic group at Level A (the highest) was the Han. The four ethnic groups mentioned earlier constituted category B. Those who were scattered in the southwest such as *Miao*, *Yao* and *Yi* comprised Level C for the presumed absence of civilization and their geo-political insignificance (ibid.). The extreme version of the ignorance of minority groups is found in the kind of state ideologies that arbitrarily alleged that ethnic minority groups are merely large or small branches of the same blood lineage (*tongyi xuetong de daxiao zongzhi*) of the Han,[21] and even asserted that 'do not let a single (minority) ethnic group maintain their different costume, script and language (Jiang Zhongzheng 1944, cited in Xie Jian 2004:51).

As argued earlier, for the Nationalist Party, there were four ethnic minority groups, Manchurian, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan. Hui are the Muslims in Xinjiang (e.g. Uygur), and Tibetans are only those in the Tibet territory. In other words, they are not the Muslims and Tibetans I am discussing in my thesis – the latter communities are located in between the former communities and the Chinese Han as delineated in chapters one and three. While Tibet had tried to become independent throughout the first half of the twentieth century and therefore had had serious tension with the Chinese government (see, for example, Goldstein 1998), Muslim Hui had experienced very different relationships with the Chinese. Hui were ruthlessly repressed by the Qing rulers as a response to their rebellions that shook the Qing regime. This resulted in the Hui coming to be seen and treated as rebels, and hence the Qing regime lost its interest to guarantee their life and faith. Under these circumstances, Hui survivors from the Qing dynasty, intellectuals or religious leaders, started to explore how to clear up Han biases and so ensure their life and freedom of religion. Further, they reconciled

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[21] This can be seen as shades of biological racism under the impact of racial discourse from Europe since the nineteenth century.

their attempts to revive their religion and to make a contribution to the Chinese revolution. This reconciliation resulted from their awareness that they cannot overwhelm Chinese or China, and so it does not make much sense to establish their own regime. As a consequence, they became co-operators with the Chinese Han although the Nationalist Party, based on the view of making a single Chinese nation, supported the idea that this Muslim group was Han who believed in Islam (Songben 2003).

By contrast, the CCP recognised them as the Hui nationality, a different ethnic group from the Han.[22] That is to say that the CCP, following on from the Nationalist approach but also in relation to its own experiences and ideology, developed a more sensitive and sensible standpoint towards ethnic minorities. Except for the recognition of Hui (and Tibetan too), it was also aware of the existence of more groups beyond the five ethnic communities, such as the Korean in the northeast and the Taiwanese in Fujian in the Republican era, and also once guaranteed ethnic minorities rights of self-determination (ibid.). The Ethnic Identification Project that was carried out after it came to power in 1949 is another proof of its divergence from the historically formulated assimilationist pattern that aimed to sinicise minority groups with superior Han culture or simply overlooked minority groups. Nevertheless, like the Nationalists, the CCP's concept of minority determination eventually gave way to the ideology of Chinese nationhood that resulted in the introduction of the concept of minority (regional) autonomy. Relatedly, the recognition of the minority population and the endowment of it with the regional autonomy system did not lead the CCP to full respect for minority customs or religious faiths. Rather, the idea of respect largely stays at the level of legal formalities, which concealed the real inequality between the Han and the minority population (Xie Jian 2004).[23] This is particularly striking during the period between the late 1950s and 1970s when minority

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[22] To recognise Hui as an independent nationality is significant and unique in that the Hui is the only ethnic group identified in line with religion as argued in chapter three. Moreover, this recognition also deviated from Joseph Stalin's four criteria (language, territory, economy and psychology) to identify ethnic groups that have long dominated in ethnic identification in China. For further information, see Gladney (2004) and Songben (2003). For an examination of Marxist-Leninist prescriptions and the Soviet example on the nationality issue that predominantly influenced the CCP policy, see Dreyer (1976).

[23] The notion of 'legal formalities' is borrowed from Kymlicka (Kymlicka 2001). Xie's expression here is 'a furious political equality'.

customs and religions were accused of being backward and feudal and this was coupled by the destruction of numerous religious buildings such as monasteries or mosques, or when the minority population was forced to melt (*ronghe*) into the Han under the CCP's civilizing projects, an arguably different version of the assimilationist model from that of the Nationalists.[24]

New developments in culturalism

Although the *suzhi* project (see below) is more directed towards peripheral populations, for example, peasants (in Murphy 2004) or ethnic minorities, it is nevertheless an agenda aiming to make fundamental changes in the Chinese national character as a whole, as observed by Mitter (2004). This is an inevitable result of the ambivalence that (Han) Chinese have towards its culture after encountering the science and democracy of the West in the nineteenth century, and of a long period of self-enclosedness under the CCP regime later on. Both experiences led to a painful reflexivity concerning the legacy of Confucianism (regardless of what content it actually contains) that provoked the New Culture Movement and the *Heshang* on the one hand, and on the other, fostered the catalyst of the Chinese nationalism of politicians, elites and the masses alike. [25]

This ambivalence or ambiguity can be seen from China's moving back and forth between aversion to and promotion of foreign ideas, between repudiation to celebration of national traditions, and between the Cultural Revolution to post-Mao modernisation through modern Chinese history (Townsend 1992:101). It is not an exaggeration to say that a hundred years' pursuit of enrichment of the country and of strengthening the military *(fuguo qiangbing)* is also a pursuit of a new confidence in Chinese culture.

In 2004 when China has drawn global attention for its assumed role of threatening or motoring international economic growth, one of the *Heshang*'s authors started

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[24] Harrell (1995) charted civilizing projects as three metaphors that can be seen below.

[25] This shift is not agreed by all scholars, for example Duara (1993. Also see chapter one, footnote 13). However the paradigm that holds this perspective was termed by Townsend (1992) as the 'culturalism to nationalism thesis'. In his article, Townsend distinguishes between culturalism and nationalism, and at the same time points out the connections between both. In the meantime, he also criticises the weaknesses of the concept of culturalism that leads him to stress the value of the notion as a 'heuristic device'. For more details, and in particular for more technical analysis of culturalism as identity and as movement, see Townsend.

to publish his latest work (in instalments online) that he claims draws on his observations in mainland China, Japan, the USA and Europe, and his reflexivity on human civilization over the last years (Xie Xuanjun 2004). Entitled 'Chinese Civilization Integrates the Globe' (*Zhongguo Wenming Zhenghe Quanqiu*), this work turns its back on *Heshang*, and argues that European or Western colonial civilization is in fact a secular one of anti-Christianity, and the disintegration of the ex-Eastern European bloc is the beginning of the end of the European colonial system. Hence Europe or the existing post-colonial civilization system has lost power over itself and cannot resolve the most serious problems facing human beings today such as environmental pollution, species extinction, immorality and war. On the other hand, the challenge from Islamic fundamentalism to the world order is not worrying because it is anyway within the existing system of civilization and thus controllable. It concludes that Chinese civilization that centred on '*lizhi*' (lit. rite system), i.e. a system pursuing inter-balance between a central (capital) city and local vassal autonomy, is a suitable one to resolve increasingly salient extremist tendencies and so integrate human beings as a whole. Correspondingly, East Asians, the creators of this culture, are claimed to have the highest intelligence that is alleged to have been evidenced in historical studies, cultural philosophy and political development, as well as by the latest anthropological reports. The asserted superiority of the East Asian race (!) is therefore justified by history, culture and science. In other words, even though Chinese culture lost its confidence at times in particular in modern history when confronting Western culture, culturalism is always crouching there for the moment when it can take the opportunity to stand out again over other cultures.

Indeed, Confucianism-oriented Chinese culture has never been substantively uprooted in spite of devastating damages or challenges to it throughout history. The damages or challenges incorporate the cruel *fenshu kengru* (burning books and burying (Confucian) scholars alive) by the first emperor of the Qin dynasty over 2,000 years ago; the severe challenge posed to it by the West 100 years ago; Mao Zedong's attempts to eradicate it through his notorious persecution of scholars who were labelled as '*chou laojiu*' (the old stingy ninth people) during the Cultural Revolution; and the call for the deep-blue civilization to displace it in the television series *Heshang* more recently. In fact, all challenges, criticism or

damage towards Chinese culture have awakened, cultivated and reinforced the consciousness of the Han (Chinese) cultural identity against the Western imperialism on the one hand, and on the other, driven the Han to continue its civilizing projects towards its peripheral peoples more urgently in attempts, and in the name, of the modernisation of China. Meanwhile, this culturalism towards ethnic minorities can also be understood as a result of shifting oppression from Western forces that are much stronger and aggressive to vulnerable domestic minority cultures.

In the light of the economic success of East Asia that supposedly benefited from the legacy of Confucianism, and of the disorder of the world system that is believed to be primarily caused by the Western new imperialism, the sentiment of superiority of Chinese Han culture has found room to voice itself, not only on the international stage, but also within its territory where Chinese culture is taken as the ideal model to conduct patriotic education as well as to foster a new confidence in Chinese culture so as to (re)construct a Chinese nation.[26] This (re)construction of the Chinese nation aims to unify ethnic groups within China under the same polity, and at the same time, under the same culture, i.e. Han based 'China (as a nation-state) culture'.[27] This reconstruction is backed up by the kind of belief that the Chinese nation has been historically formulated as a result of interaction between and integration of different ethnic groups. In this historical formulation, argues Fei Xiaotong, Han culture became a nucleus of the civilization of the Chinese nation that consists of many different ethnic groups' cultures as a result of nomadic groups submissively and actively melting into the Han after entering plains, where the type of agricultural society with intensive and meticulous farming was located (Fei Xiaotong 1989:31).[28]

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[26] Recently *dujing* (reading the Confucian classics) is flourishing among Chinese children, which emerged in Taiwan in the mid-1990s and spread to Mainland China, Hong Kong and the Chinese communities in the North America and Southeast Asia. In spite of its potential philosophy of blind loyalty to the regime and neglect of the role law plays in modern society, it is nevertheless believed to be able to bring out the potential of children, to help to improve language skills, enhance morality and develop their intelligence (Wanwei Wang 2004a).

[27] A subtle difference between two expressions in modern Chinese is worth noting: Zhongguo wenhua (Zhongguo culture) and Zhonghua wenming (Zhonghua civilization). The former is more associated with Chinese classics, i.e. high culture, whereas the latter is a hotchpotch of all cultures within China boundaries, although its core is still Han culture.

[28] Also see the concept of plurality and unity (*duoyuan yiti*) of the Chinese nation in the next chapter.

The educational legacy of imperial China: the civil service examinations

The imagined superiority of Han culture or Huaxia civilization ran through all the dynasties of Han or non-Han rulers. This is evidenced in the sinicisation of many minority regimes, intentionally or otherwise, in history, as argued earlier. Xiao Jingyang (1995:100) offers more examples. After coming to power, many minority rulers adopted a name of the dynasties ruled by Han people as that of their dynasty, and followed the example of bureaucratic institutions of Han-ruled dynasties, or venerated Confucianism, or changed their surnames to Han.[29] Nevertheless, as both Mitter (2004) and Townsend (1992) rightly point out, culturalism (although only the latter author actually uses this term) is primarily an intellectual ideology or movement. This ideology or movement was not only premised on an abstract concept, but had in fact been institutionalised through the establishment of the civil service examinations of imperial China (*keju kaoshi*), and reinforced in the continuity of the examination system that lasted for thirteen hundred years before it came to an end at the end of the imperial era. During this long period, this tradition was almost uninterrupted, except for a forty years' suspension by the Mongolian rulers of the Yuan dynasty before it finally re-instituted the examinations (Schirokauer 1981:7).

Education in the imperial period was characterised by two features: public education was largely left to the people, and the civil service examinations system dominated and guided the education domain (Miyazaki 1981:111-129). The civil service examinations system was formally introduced in the Sui dynasty (581-618) as a means of suppressing the power of the aristocracy (the 'splendidly dressed up group of people' that emerged from the Eastern Han dynasty) who had dominated and transmitted top officialdom as a result of their monopolisation of

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[29] Here again, I am trying to simplify the issue. As argued earlier, what is now called Chinese or Han culture has kept changing its elements and content through the whole history. This was particularly true in the periods when China was ruled by Mongolians and Manchus, whose culture made a considerable contribution to today's 'standard' Han culture that is widely recognised as being Beijing based. On the other hand, owing to a different historical development, the Chinese Han culture in the south is distinctive compared to its northern counterpart. In a word, the notion of Chinese culture is very problematic itself. This is why some informed southern Han deride Beijingese as minoritised Han while northern Han ridicule southerners as uncivilized aboriginals. Nonetheless, the culturalism of Han as an abstract concept is still accepted and held by officially identified Han and other ethnic groups as the means of distinguishing between different peoples, some of whom are superior to others. For a fascinating account of the invention of the Manchu 'people' and a Manchu language in the Qing dynasty, which significantly helped to shape standard Chinese culture that China has today, see Crossley (1994).

scholarship in the classics on a family basis as argued earlier. However, the examination system held up and reinforced the classics of Confucianism as a standard, and eventually became essential for the establishment of imperial autocracy in the Song dynasty. This is to say that the aristocracy had an advantaged position over other classes when it participated in the examinations on account of its greater fluency in the classics (for more details, see Miyazaki 1981).[30] On the other hand, one of the chief ministers of the Song period, Wang Anshi, established the capital university followed by the establishment of other local universities that aimed to displace the examinations system by cultivating candidates for positions in government. This reform did not succeed and selection of government officials was still enacted through the civil examinations, perhaps partially for economic reasons in that to run a school system is much more expensive than to merely manage an examination system. This caused a decline in public schooling and resulted in the existence of schools in name only in the Ming dynasty, or the role of schools as merely preparatory to examinations (ibid.).

One of the results of the survival of the civil service examinations system was that it kept producing a surplus of candidates for official positions. The examinations were therefore, carried out more or less only for the sake of complying with earlier precedents, which led to its end in 1905 and the establishment of the modern education system directed at mass education in schools. Undeniably, the civil service examinations system left a profound legacy after its abolition. The system was unusually democratic in that it was open to anyone regardless of background,[31] and its fairness in the way examinations were conducted with strict discipline. In addition, its emphasis on literary studies meant that the military officers remained subordinated to civilians. This subordination of the military

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[30] However, this case is interestingly different from Bourdieu's observation of the process in which the culture of a certain group is capitalised through institutionalisation by the same cultural group. To what extent this process has influenced the shaping of the relationship between intellectuals and the regime, and the attitude of scholars towards their rulers are worthy of exploration.

[31] However, this democracy was not applicable to women. In this sense, gender disparity can also be considered another legacy of the imperial examinations system although it is not the phenomenon only in China. Moreover, gender disparity was not only the legacy of the examination system, but fundamentally was the legacy of Confucianism that located women in a subordinated position in both families and society before the establishment of the examinations system. In this light, whereby an ideal man was said to be the combination of both moral and literary matters (see below), a woman could not be regarded as possessing morality unless she had no literary/literacy knowledge (*nüzi wu cai bian shi de*).

power enabled the vast nation to stay in peace until the Qing dynasty when foreign forces intruded and got China involved in a number of wars (ibid.). However, the abolition of the examination system itself is evidence of its intrinsic defects. This system embedded a careerist attitude towards scholarship, which to a significant degree shaped the education focus in today's China that is narrowly centred upon college entrance examinations. Relatedly, the examinations system also brought misery to the vast majority of examinees who failed in examinations. This is understandable given the fact that on the one hand to devote one's energies to the civil service examinations was an extremely costly pursuit although in fact it was only the middle class who could afford this (so the equality of the system very much stayed at the level of theory). On the other hand very limited demand for more government officials also meant that the number of examinees who could eventually receive a *jinshi* (the highest) degree after going through all levels of examinations was only one out of every three thousand (ibid.).

On the contrary, those who succeeded in the civil service examinations would then win their honourable status from the emperor, and at the same time their eminence was acknowledged by a public opinion that was formed and controlled by intellectuals (ibid.). As a result, this group of people not only became political elites, but also cultural elites characterised by the literary orientation of the civil service examinations. This identity of cultural and political elites cultivated the notion of ***xiushen*** (cultivate oneself), ***qijia*** (put the family in order), ***zhiguo*** (rule the country), ***ping tianxia*** (unify the world in peace) among elites (*xiu*, *qi*, *zhi*, *ping*). This philosophy not only connected individual cultivation in moral and literary matters to ruling of the country and the world, but also regarded the management of family life and political life as inseparable. Therefore the state was thought to be the extended family.[32] This integration of four levels comprised the ideal package of intellectual accomplishment. Therefore, a system that was heavily reliant upon selecting government officials not only served as an examination of the career potential of a person, but also, if not more, as a means of 'discovering men of high moral character as well as of scholarly and literary attainment' (Schirokauer 1981:7). This fostered the kind of Chinese elites who are

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[32] This integrating management of the family with that of the state is also reflected in the Chinese word for 'country' or '(nation-)state', *guojia*, which literally means 'state-family'.

always ready for taking the world (*tianxia*, all under heaven) as their own responsibility as a result of their confidence in their morality and cultural accomplishment. They believe in the fact that the moral and culture they possessed and represented were the ultimate standard that should be used to 'integrate' the world (globe), and the path through which this can be achieved is to educate the masses with this universal culture.[33] On the other hand, since the literary studies involved narrowly memorising the Confucian classics and writing poems and essays, one of its main effects was that these intellectuals became inflexible in relation to the new learning, and at the same time too proud to engage in commerce while too weak to do physical labour (Miyazaki 1981:125-126). This disconnection between education and the real world is still a noticeable feature of the modern Chinese educational system as argued in subsequent chapters.

As a benchmark of career, political, cultural and moral achievement, education becoming the ultimate life goal of affordable (or unaffordable!) people is understandable. This fad for education, or more precisely, for examinations, is condensed in numerous household phrases (and practised by the whole nation). To name a few, 'the worth of other pursuits is small, the study of books excels them all (*wanban jie xiapin, wei you dushu gao*)'; 'there are automatically gold-made houses in books; and there are automatically jade-like faces (i.e. beautiful women) in books (*shu zhong ziyou huangjin wu, shuzhong ziyou yan ru yu*)'; a literary or intellectual family is respectfully called 'a family with book fragrance (*shuxiang mendi*)'; hard working stories in schools were also recorded and passed on in families, schools as well as the larger society since imperial times. The stories are invoked to encourage younger generations to bear hard and bitter study conditions and life for the very moment when one's name appears on the list of successful candidates in the imperial examinations (*jinbang timing shi*, lit. when one's name is inscribed on the golden list). These kinds of story were not only involved with working hard in straitened circumstances (*hanchuang kudu*, lit. study hard by a cold window.), but also, if not more, referred to self-maltreatment

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[33] When portraying that the conviction that was triggered by the New Culture Movement as that 'educated classes were the only ones who could save China (an idea which had so infuriated Mao)', Mitter observes that this conviction 'echoed a mindset that went back even before May Fourth to the Era when Confucianism had dominated' (Mitter 2004:269).

by which to force oneself away from, for example, tiredness or sleepiness during studying (*tou xuan liang, zhui ci gu,* lit. hang one's hair from a beam, pierce one's thigh with awl.). Therefore imperial China produced an examination hell, both in terms of its competitiveness and hardship – as Miyazaki puts it (1981) – which has been taken over by modern and contemporary China as can be seen in the subsequent chapters.

The *wenhua* (culture) discourse of China

One of the main reasons why the examinations system could survive for thirteen hundred years in a massive country was closely connected with the first imperial emperor in Chinese history *Yingzheng* of the Qin dynasty. As mentioned earlier, one of the most influential policies *Yingzheng* introduced was the standardisation of the Chinese writing system, Chinese characters, which became the official writing system of imperial China ever since. This standardised system enabled the literary-based civil service examinations to be conducted across this massive country where languages in different locations, to a varied extent, were unintelligible. As a result, *Hanzi* (Chinese characters), a highly standardised writing system, not only functioned as the conveyor of the classics, but also evolved a highly sophisticated form of art, calligraphy. To acquire Chinese characters is therefore not only a necessity for people to become literate, but also to access 'universal' morality and culture, including high culture of calligraphy and Chinese painting – the latter was substantially influenced by and closely associated to the former. In other words, Chinese characters became the most basic and important symbol of Chinese (high) culture, and those who fluently master this system were considered highly respectable, particularly in early periods of imperial China when diffusion of literary culture was very limited because there were only both rare and expensive hand-copied books (Miyazaki 1981:113-114). On the other hand, even though printing, communication and public schooling together have made acquisition of Chinese characters widely accessible in modern China, difficulties in learning characters still prevents a large number of people from becoming reasonably knowledgeable and fluent in the system. In fact, only those who have been specifically trained, for example, in history or Chinese departments of universities, can possibly fluently master this system and are regarded as having a high cultural level. Therefore, education in

China is technically much related to acquisition of Chinese characters in the first place, which is symbolically associated to one's 'cultural level' (*wenhua shuiping* or *wenhua chengdu*).

It was not until the fifth national census in 2000 that the term 'cultural level' was replaced by 'educational level' or 'the level of received education' (*shou jiaoyu chengdu*), a relatively neutral term, although education started to include other subjects such as sciences, technology, rather than merely literary studies some 100 years ago. In spite of this, '*wenhua*', or 'culture', is still the preferred vernacular expression in public discourse that primarily complies with the traditional conception: acquisition of Chinese characters, and further, the whole package of culture it conveys and wraps (including sciences).[34] So for a long time, to learn culture (*xue wenhua*) primarily refers to learning characters. Further, when one is said to 'have culture' (*you wenhua*), it means that he or she has knowledge of Chinese characters and of other subjects wrapped by and/or taught in Chinese characters. In other words, mastery of the kind of cultures wrapped with writing systems other than Chinese characters is probably not regarded as 'having culture' or will be regarded as 'having no culture' (*mei wenhua*). In his illustration of the conception of 'culture' in the Chinese context, Gladney (1999:59) describes an elderly Hui Hajji who did not think that he had culture despite the fact that this Hajji had spent 12 years living in the Middle East and was fluent in Persian, Arabic, and was a master of the Islamic natural sciences.

This literacy-based education has fostered a feeling of worship towards scripts that is employed by the government as well as the public to distinguish backwardness from progress. As can be seen in the next chapter, the Chinese government helped establish writing systems for some 'backward' ethnic minorities who did not have their scripts. Meanwhile, when asked about the relationship between ethnicity and education, one of my Muslim Hui informants commented that the Muslim Salar are even more backward (than Hui) because they do not even have their own writing system corresponding to their language (a

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[34] For instance, some of my minority informants insisted that sciences and technology have been invented and developed by the Han, the 'old brother' (*lao dage*). Also see chapter five.

kind of Turkish) while Hui, as Chinese speakers, have Chinese characters. This literacy-in-Chinese-based education is actually reflected in the two characters of the Chinese word *wenhua* (culture) itself. *Wen*, translated as 'literary, literature, script, inscription', is the 'central part of the idea of culture' (ibid.:60), and *hua*, translated as 'change, transform', is the process of culturing people. Although as a modern Chinese word, '*wenhua*' is the translation of 'culture' in the European languages that were imported via Japanese in the nineteenth century, it is nevertheless rooted in the classical concept of *wenzhi jiaohua*, for which *wenhua* stands. *Wenzhi* (*zhi*, rule, manage, govern) can be understood both as 'government by civilians rather than military men' and 'government promotion of literature and the arts', and is the Chinese mode of governance; *jiaohua* (*jiao*, educate, train in good manners) is the process of educating people so as to transform them, and hence can be understood as civilized intercourse. Therefore, the notion of *wenhua* covers a wide range of dimensions from culturalism, elitism, governance to the transformation of people.

In conceptualising this transformation of people, or civilizing projects, Harrell (1995) highlighted three ways (or metaphors in his terms) with respect to relationships between civilizers and civilized: the metaphor of sex, of education and of history. In the metaphor of sex, peripheral people are eroticised and feminised in the way that minorities are thought to be erotic and promiscuous as a result of their presumably low level of culture or limited civilized morals of sexual repression. Peripheral people, who are in fact almost exclusively minority women, have been seen as objects of sexual desire, which reflected the hegemony in a male-dominant society. Peripheral people, like women, are also seen as polluting – both dirty and dangerous. The metaphor of education aims to certify peripheral people's civilizability once they have been demonstrated as inferior in the metaphor of sex.[35] Peripheral people are childlike, they are unacquainted with abstract or metaphorical thought. They are also presented in official discourse in a big brother/little brother relationship with the Han who are socially and

[35] However, it is not only the metaphor of sex that contributes to the discourse of the inferiority of peripheral people. Their presumed lack of ability in abstraction, analysis, or comprehension of academic concepts and so on, all contribute to this discourse as can be seen in the metaphor of education here and in chapter five. For the metaphor of sex, readers can also consult Gladney (2004).

economically more advanced and represent the big brother, and so have the duty to help minorities to become advanced.[36] Meanwhile, to see peripheral people as childlike is also embedded in the belief that children always 'represent to the civilizers the best hope for accomplishing the civilizing project' (ibid.:14). The metaphor of history is an attempt to find a resolution to the paradox between the idea that minority peoples are primitive and civilizable on the one hand, and innately backward and hence uncivilizable on the other hand. When minority people are placed on the scale of the development of human history, they therefore are ancient, unchanged and thus resemble the ancestors of the civilizers, and so the civilizers have some chance of success. In the light of the three metaphors, the people at the centre are representative of masculinity, adulthood and modernity, which is evidence of their legitimate status characterised by political and moral superiority (ibid.).

The recently noticeable practice of a civilizing mission is highlighted by the *suzhi* campaign that was largely introduced into public discourse in the 1980s. Literally 'essential character', and generally translated as 'quality' in English, '*suzhi* is an amorphous concept that refers to the innate and nurtured physical, intellectual and ideological characteristics of a person' (Murphy 2004:2). In most academic articles discussing *suzhi*, the concept is divided into *shenti suzhi* (physical quality) and *wenhua suzhi* (cultural quality), and the latter principally refers to educational level (*jiaoyu shuiping*). The former is largely associated with the idea of eugenics that was imported with the discourse of race from Europe at the turn of the twentieth century (see Dikötter 1992, in particular chapter six), and more recently is embodied in the state one-child-per-couple policy. This policy is interpreted as '*shaosheng yousheng*' (bear fewer and better children) or '*yousheng youyu*' (bear and rear better children). The *suzhi* agenda, as a new official ideological concept, aims to transform the low quality Chinese populace at the periphery (the rural population in Murphy) that are characterised by tradition, poverty and agrarianism to modernity, prosperity and industrialism (Murphy 2004:3). This transformation is particularly hoped to be realised through *suzhi jiaoyu* (lit. quality education)

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[36] Baogang He (2004) provides an interesting perspective in explaining that this brotherhood relation is based on a paternalistic ideology towards all types of relationships such as relations between the ethnic majority and minority communities, between the rulers and the masses.

that aims to cultivate the kind of population with all-round development in physical, intellectual and ideological characteristics. To realise this principle, educational objectives should shift from traditional examination-driven rote learning to emphasizing 'self-expression, manual dexterity, life skills appropriate to the local environment and extra-curricula activities such as music, sport and art' (ibid.). Apparently, the *suzhi* campaign is hoped to be a remedy in that it aims to achieve both prosperity and equality in both economic and cultural terms.

However, today *wenhua* can also be used in such phrase as 'ethnic minority cultures' (*shaoshu minzu wenhua*). *Wenhua* in this context does not contain the same meaning as it does in 'having (no Chinese) culture', but rather, refers to the historical heritage of ethnic minorities and so is thought to be static and should be kept in museums.[37] Different discourses about the concept of culture or *wenhua* are in fact constructed by discursive practices that favour mainstream culture over the others, as Wetherell and Potter argue (1992). In their portrayal of Pākehā positions in relation to Māori in New Zealand, the former people regard themselves as possessing society, having civilization, and holding a mundane, technical and practical outlook. These characteristics are not presented as culture, but as simple common sense. In this discourse, Māori people are thought to possess *culture* that makes them exotic and abnormal compared to the normal mode of the Pākehā majority. This culture discourse exactly mirrors the culture discourse in the Chinese context where an ethnic minority people with their own culture is probably thought not to have culture if they are not educated in mainstream schools or with the mainstream civilization, or in Chinese characters as argued above. In other words, their culture is primarily understood in an anthropological sense that parallels with colonialist or imperialist views of the primitivity and inferiority of the Other's culture in contrast with the complexity and superiority of their own culture. The metaphor of history in civilization projects portrayed by Harrell earlier is another version of this culture discourse.

[37] Gladney (2004) illustrates this 'in-museum' culture. See particularly chapter three.

The current ethos in education

As argued above, education, or examination-driven education, had long been the most important official way of achieving upward social mobility in imperial China. The educational system in modern China that is seemingly driven by examinations is, to a significant extent, the legacy of the imperial system. Learning from the lesson of Mao's devastation of scholars and the knowledge and education they represented, and also under rapid development of the global knowledge economy, the Chinese government in the late 1970s proposed the slogan of 'respect knowledge, respect talent' (*zunzhong zhishi, zunzhong rencai*).[38] This indicated the beginning of a new era in China since then, an era of supposed reform and opening-up (*gaige kaifang*). The pursuit of knowledge came into fashion again, marked by re-introducing nationally uniform college entrance examinations in 1977. Thus, to successfully enter higher education means that someone from a low socio-economic urban family will significantly achieve social mobility whilst one from a rural family will become entitled to registered permanent urban residence (*chengzhen hukou*).[39] This is associated with the government that will allocate university graduates a job in a state work unit, which secures a regularly paid salary as well as all other kinds of state welfare benefits. This policy inevitably recalls the way in which the imperial system worked in selecting government officials. Nevertheless, unlike in imperial times, examinees or pupils did not pay for the education run by the Party-state until well after the economic reform. In other words, state-run schools before 1990s were primarily open to everyone that largely focused on cultivation of an elite class (through allocating jobs in state sectors to graduates). Hence, the democracy of the imperial examinations seems to be once achieved more thoroughly under the rule of the CCP. In addition to this career benefit, successful examinees have also won respect for their assumed cultural and moral merits as part of the educational achievement, which is partially a continuity of the role education played in imperial times.

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[38] This idea is more associated with economic development rather than with transformation of Chinese culture or civilization that *Heshang* advocated.

[39] The inequality between rural and urban residents that is represented in the system of residence registration has drawn growing public attention recently, which has led to a call among academics for the termination of different policies for rural and urban areas. See Lu Xueyi (2004) for further information about this system.

Since the mid-1980s, to be engaged in commercial business increasingly became more and more profitable owing to an increasingly free economy, and this is said to have stirred up a new tide of 'study is useless' thinking (*dushu wuyong lun*) that was once popular in the Cultural Revolution when Confucius and his doctrine were under acute attack. This was particularly salient between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, which was characterised by a severe brain drain – public servants, teachers or otherwise turned away from state work units to the 'commercial sea' (*xiahai*). It equally drew a number of students away from schooling to adventure in this commercial sea. The cessation of assigning jobs by the government to school or college graduates in 1996 exacerbated the situation. On the other hand, the continuity of the reform also means that the state gradually introduced policies of, for example, raising the salary of employees working in the state system, or providing other kinds of welfare benefits. These new policies aim to attract more knowledgeable, cultured and young talent into state employment while stopping a further brain drain from state sectors. At the same time the new policy of privatisation and devolution of the state-run enterprises was also introduced. This policy led millions of mainly unskilled or semi-skilled workers to be laid-off from their formerly secure positions. These unemployed workers therefore became what is called 'go-off-post workers (*xiagang gongren*)'.

The reform of the public servants system and of state-run enterprises has shed new light on the benefits that education can bring. Education has again come to be the essential concern of individual families as well as of the government at all levels, although it may be different as to what subjects to offer by the government, and what subjects to study on the part of the masses as the socio-economic situation keeps changing. The bottom-up strategy based in families aims to successfully enroll children in (good) colleges or universities, and in popular subjects; the top-down policy made by the central government aims to expand education to reach a wider population by increasing enrolment rates at all educational levels under the impact of a knowledge-economy-based global competitiveness.[40] This educational carnival has been marching forward rapidly at

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[40] This is a highly contested notion and is often used rhetorically by governments to justify a range of disparate policies/interventions. To counter-pose cultural rights to economic development is one example. For a discussion of this, see the concluding chapter.

the expense of appropriate and sufficient human and material resources for a quality education. On the other hand, it also means that parents, schools and society are increasingly putting pressure on students in terms of educational performance which places students in a new 'examination hell'.[41] In this light, examination results always come to be the most important, if not the only, criterion by which both schools and families measure students' achievement. In a word, education has come to be the top priority again under the impact of global development and the revival of the educational tradition of China.

This (particularly college entrance) examinations-driven and competitive schooling has made demands for a highly standardised educational system, which has inevitably resulted in a degree of blindness to difference in gender, class, ethnicity and region. Although the educational system in the past, imperial times or otherwise, was also largely blind to difference in various cultures (broadly understood), an educational system blind to cultural diversity today is difficult to account for, given the growing consciousness of cultural difference and the importance of recognition of it among the government, academic commentators and the masses. In fact, in this blindness, Chinese (Han) culture has been under threat itself at the global level, and correspondingly, other cultures than the dominant one in China have been pushed to a more peripheral position. Nonetheless, at the national level, Chinese Han culture still firmly holds the hegemony whereas the requirement for 'blindness' in education has brought in a wider gap between students owing to their differential backgrounds in socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity or region. Meanwhile, education has also been reduced to a merely careerist instrument that no longer emphasises individual cultural or moral accomplishment as the imperial system did. The concept of *suzhi* (quality) education was hence proposed under this societal climate, which also echoed the campaign of construction of two civilizations (*liangge wenming*), i.e. material civilization and spiritual civilization (*wuzhi wenming he jingshen wenming*), put forward by Deng Xiaoping in the mid-1980s.[42]

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[41] Jiang Hong (2004) describes the high competitiveness in basic education (*jichu jiaoyu*) and its negative effects on the socialisation of children.

[42] Like the concept of *suzhi* education, the construction of two civilizations also focuses on spiritual or moral construction over its material counterpart. For more relevant information on the concept of spiritual civilization construction, see Zhongguo Jingshen Wenming Wang.

However, this blindness in education is not something that social entities deliberately exercise – either governments or various social or cultural communities. In fact, as argued in more detail in the next chapter, both governments and social or cultural communities have made efforts to narrow the educational gap caused by a wide range of factors. Governments at different levels have introduced more carefully tailored policies, whereas communities have also adopted more responsive strategies. Meanwhile, academics in their research are also attempting to make contributions by examining government policies and community forces alike. All of that is grounded in a broad consensus among governments, academics and the public that one primary aim of education ought to ensure a form of equality that is mainly indicated by equal achievement by students from different backgrounds. Where such achievement is unequal, it is crucial to explore what underlies these differences in achievement. Nonetheless, equality in education is a very long-term goal to achieve for two major reasons. First, a marketised or fee-charging education system is likely to exclude people from worse-off backgrounds, and this will be exacerbated if (sufficient) policies of aiding disadvantaged families are not in place accordingly and in time.

Second, an education that is driven by a knowledge-economy based global competitiveness is actually leading to a more standardised knowledge package for teaching in schools that is supposedly going to benefit an economically oriented society. This is inevitably leaving even less room for consideration or even awareness of the kind of cultures that are derived from difference in gender, class, ethnicity or region. As a consequence, this education has and will put students from different cultural backgrounds on an unequal footing in that they supposedly possess standardised aptitude, or the cultural capital in Bourdieu's terms (Bourdieu 1977, 1986), for schooling.[43] This education is characterised by a male, middle class, Han and the eastern areas (i.e. more advanced areas in terms of industrialisation and related interests) biased system in the Chinese case. When Bourdieu (ibid.) was unmasking the process in which the embodied culture of a certain group is being capitalised through its institutionalisation by the

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Coincidentally, the Japanese scholar Yasuaki expresses his preference of the idea of pursuit of spiritual and material well-being over the idea of human dignity of Western liberalism as a universal value in a dialogue on East Asian values and human rights. See Yasuaki (1999).

[43] Bourdieu's thesis of cultural capital is describes in detail in chapter two.

educational system, he probably did not have in mind the idea of Han cultural hegemony dominating education, nor the imperial examinations system that highly institutionalised and so capitalised (!) Confucianism.

Nevertheless, a global-economy-driven educational system at present is also practising institutionalisation of a certain culture at the expense of other cultures on a globally massive scale that has never been seen before.[44] As a consequence, both historical and global impetuses have made up an educational context that is combined with age-long Chinese culturalism, career and self-accomplishment focused educational tradition, increasing competitiveness driven by the knowledge economy, and Chinese ways of governing and engineering society and people (which are largely reflected in state policies as described earlier and later). This is a complex and competing package in which contestation not only exists between different cultures, but also between economy and culture, as well as between the government and various social or cultural communities. This new and much more complicated educational landscape, in which the culture discourse of China has been deeply ingrained, has been shaping governmental policies of education and impacting (not only) ethnic minority educational experiences. Taking from the current ethos in education, I examine in the subsequent chapters how this educational system that is shaped by state political concern or social control, Han cultural chauvinism and the national pursuit of economic growth works. This examination focuses on current policies, practices and discourses concerning the education of ethnic minorities (chapter five), and how ethnic minorities and majority evaluate minority peoples in relation to culture and education (chapters six, seven and eight).

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[44] This argument needs further substantiation. What is here particular in need is to develop the links between the forms of knowledge required by the knowledge economy; the extent to which they have in fact been institutionalised; the view that the values of the minority cultures are being institutionalised. However, given the space limit and the relatively lower relevance of these issues to my research focus on the cultural exclusion of ethnic minorities in China, I will identify them as the further areas of research (see chapter nine).

Chapter Five

The Education of Ethnic Minorities: Policy, Practice and Discourse

Introduction

This chapter sets out an overview of the education of ethnic minorities that has been simultaneously influenced by Chinese culturalism, a career- and self-accomplishment-focused educational tradition, the move towards a knowledge economy in recent years, and the Chinese way of governance. It will centre on policies and practices and academic evaluations of the education of ethnic minorities. In so doing, it aims to provide a macro backdrop for the remaining empirical chapters on minority groups and the mainstream Han (chapters six, seven and eight) whilst it also serves as one aspect of a triangulation approach that together with the empirical chapters provides corroborative evidence concerning the cultural exclusion of ethnic minorities.

In Section One, I highlight the quantity of minority populations, their geographical distribution, and the distinctiveness and diversity of their languages and cultures. Section Two is a survey of the educational level of ethnic minorities in comparison with the majority Han. This is approached by looking at illiteracy first by ethnic group and secondly, in relation to geographical regions at the provincial level. Sections Three and Four together examine policies and practices regarding the education of ethnic minorities. Section Three outlines current state policies and practices towards minority education in general; Section Four further examines the concerns and objectives that shape minority education policies and practices, both at present and historically, mainly from a cultural perspective of ethnic minorities. Section Five is a review of the academic and public discourses that assess and diagnose the condition of the education of ethnic minorities. In doing so, the mainstream perception of ethnic minorities will come to light, which is discussed further in Section Six of the evaluation.

Ethnic minorities of China

China has 55 officially identified ethnic minority groups. The minority population in total increased from 6.06 percent (35,032,085) of the total population as recorded in the first national census of 1953 to 8.47 percent (105,226,114) of the total population as recorded in the latest (fifth) national census of 2000 (RhSKT and JF 2003:2-3). In 2000, the minority groups with a population of more than 5,000,000 are Zhuang (16,178,811), Manchu (10,682,262), Hui (9,816,805), Miao (8,940,116), Uygur (8,399,393), Tujia (8,028,133), Yi (7,762,272), Mongolian (5,813,947) and Tibetan (5,416,021). Most minority groups inhabit the border areas of the northwest, southwest and northeast. There are political tensions between these regions and China proper based on territorial disputes as well as on cultural differences; there are significant populations of the same ethnic groups on both sides of the border, from the Far East of Russia to Central Asia, and then down to South and Southeast Asia (see the Map of China and the Map of Ethnolinguistic Groups in China, pages 278 & 281). Furthermore, over 50 percent of the minority population (53,492,763) is concentrated in western regions, which are traditionally referred to as the three minority autonomous regions, Ningxia Hui, Tibet and Xinjiang Uygur; six provinces, Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan and Yunnan; and one municipality, Chongqing. In the government's 'Open Up the West' campaign (*Xibu Da Kaifa*), the other two minority autonomous regions, Inner Mongolia and Guangxi Zhuang are also incorporated in this category; the minority population in the 'new' West thus amounts to nearly 80 percent of the total (see the Map of the New West on page 282) (RPB & RhSKT 2002; RhSKT and JF 2003).[1]

The number of minority groups that are recognised by the state is much fewer than the number of groups (more than four hundred) who claimed their minority identity when China embarked on its 'Ethnic (Minority) Identification Project' in the early 1950s.[2] Despite the relatively small ethnic minority population, the CCP's particular concern about minority groups is evident in its official recognition that the Chinese nation is constituted by different ethnic groups. The

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[1] In my research, western regions are referred to the traditional category.
[2] In the 2000 census there are still 728,113 individuals 'unidentified' and awaiting recognition (RhSKT and JF 2003; RPB and RhSKT 2002).

CCP's view developed into the concept of minority regional autonomy (also see the previous chapter), and was formally put into practice in 1947 when the first minority autonomous region (at the provincial level), the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, was established.[3] By 1965, the other four autonomous regions of its kind were all established: Xinjiang, Guangxi, Ningxia and Tibet. In the meantime, a considerable number of minority autonomous prefectures and counties (*minzu zizhi zhou, minzu zizhi xian/qi*) were also set up. By 2000 there were in total 145 minority autonomous territories at the national, prefectural and county levels. In addition, 1,256 minority villages (*minzu xiang*) are also in place though they are not entitled to autonomy. Among 55 minority groups, 44 groups, who amount to 75 percent of the minority population in the country, have their own autonomous territory. Minority autonomous regions account for 64 percent of China's territory (Wang and Chen 2001:4).

There are 61 minority languages that have been identified by Chinese linguists, with some more waiting for identification. These languages belong to five (or four, see Gladney 2004:7) of the world's language families: Sino-Tibetan (for example Mandarin, Tibetan, Zhuang, Miao, Yao), Altaic (for example Uygur, Kazakh, Mongolian, Manchu-Tungus, and perhaps Korean), Austroasiatic (for example Blang, De'ang (Benglong) and perhaps Vietnamese (Jing/Gin)), Malayo-Polynesian (for example Paiwan), and Indo-European (for example Russian and Tajik) (see the Map of Ethnolinguistic Groups in China on page 281). As far as the minority writing system is concerned, except for Manchu and Hui who use Chinese characters (and language), there are 39 different minority writing systems used by other minority groups. Of these, 24 were created by Chinese linguists with Latin letters for the basis of most of them (Teng and Wang 2001:326-328). There are also around 20 minority groups who neither have their own writing system nor has the state created the writing system for them. Therefore they generally use the Chinese writing system (ibid.:432-438).

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[3] Both the Nationalist Party and the CCP used to propose the conception of minority self-determination that they eventually gave up. In the CCP case, the conception of self-autonomy displaced that of self-determination. For a detailed examination of this shift, see Songben (2003).

Another major dimension of the distinctiveness and diversity of minority cultures is their commitment to religious beliefs, which include Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Daoism and various primitive religions (Teng and Wang 2001:174). About half of the minority population believe in a certain faith, which is also half of the religious believers across China. In comparison, believers among the majority Han who constitute the other half of religious believers make up only five percent of its whole population (Guojia Minzu Shiwu Weiyuanhui 2002:4). Buddhism and Islam, 'at least in terms of scale' (Mackerras 1999:23), are the most important faiths among other religions. While (particularly Tibetan) Buddhism is the faith of Tibetans, Mongolians, Tu, Yugur and Monba in western and northern China, Islam is adhered to by ten minority groups who are largely concentrated in northwest China, from far west Xinjiang (Uygurs, Kazakhs, Kirgiz, Uzbeks, Tatars and Tajiks) to the Gansu-Ningxia-Qinghai regions (Hui, Dongxiang, Bonan and Salar). This last region is also the nexus between several differing civilizations, (Tibetan) Buddhism, Islam and Confucianism and atheism (also see chapter three).

The educational level of ethnic minorities

The normative criterion to assess the educational level in China (as it appears in the official statistics) is called the cultural level (*wenhua chengdu*) or level of received education (*shou jiaoyu chengdu*).[4] This is measured by looking at the number of years of education received or completed in the state educational system. Different levels are labelled as: no schooling, literacy class, primary school, junior secondary school, senior secondary school, secondary vocational school, junior college, university and postgraduate. Another categorisation method is to divide the 15-year-old-plus population into literate and illiterate groups.[5] I will take the latter as the main measuring tool to look at the educational

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[4] 'Level of received education', a more neutral term, replaced 'cultural level', a term underpinned by China's 'civilizing mission' (Gladney 1999:58) in the fifth census in 2000 (PBRSKT 2002). For a concise and persuasive discussion of the constellation of culture-related terms in the educational context, see Gladney (1999:58-62). Also see the section of 'the *wenhua* discourse of China' in chapter four.

[5] In different censuses information provided with reference to (il)literacy is not identical. The information that the third census of 1982 provided is illiteracy and semi-illiteracy figures and rates of the 12-year-old-plus population, and illiteracy figures of the 6-year-old-plus population; the census in 1990 produced illiteracy and semi-illiteracy figures and rates of the 15-year-old-plus population; the census in 2000 provided figures of the 6-year-old-plus population who have non-

development of different ethnic groups. This is primarily because illiteracy in the minority population is a more serious problem in terms of its persistence and much larger scale compared to that in the majority population (RhSKTS & JF 2003). For this reason, to wipe up illiteracy in the minority population is always the top agenda of the government (Jiaoyu Bu 2004b, 2005). Meanwhile, it is also difficult to compare the minority and majority populations at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels for the reason that the education of ethnic minorities is largely carried out in minority schools, colleges and universities. This means that minority education is largely separated out from the mainstream education that usually leads to segregation between minority and majority groups in the labour market. As a result, even if a minority community has a higher, for example, graduate rate than the Han, it does not necessarily means that the group is also more competitive in the labour market than the Han as I shall demonstrate in the empirical chapters.

Whilst it is difficult to tell the general reliability of government data on which my analysis is based owing to limited resources, some unreliability with respect to this data was observable during my qualitative fieldwork. For example, according to a government official who was involved in the fifth census, her superior required that they should exaggerate of the level of education that people received by one level when reporting to the higher government in official documents. Doing so, it is said will have the effect of boosting the superior's achievement in his or her official career (*zhengji*, lit. political achievement). The same informant also said that this is a phenomenon spreading to different government levels and in various official statistics. In fact, general figures relating to the ethnic population in national censuses can be problematic as the example of the Han population in Tibetan Autonomous Region in the 1990 and 2000 censuses given by Mackerras shows (Mackerras 2004:225).

The kind of data relating to educational achievement by ethnic group that is available is at the national level. Meanwhile there is far from sufficient data at the

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schooling and attended wiping-out illiteracy classes (*saomang ban*). Meanwhile in the *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2000 Population Census of China*, the illiterate population aged 15-year-old-plus is available.

provincial, prefectural and county levels that are available to me. Given the wide range that different minority groups, as well as different members within a minority group, are distributed geographically, and their varied economic conditions, occupational patterns and educational traditions, it is necessary to combine two criteria, ethnic and regional differences in the attempt to find out the relationship between ethnicity and educational achievement. Therefore, my analysis as a whole will mainly focus on the educational level according to the national census. I will also highlight the educational gap through a comparative analysis of educational development by ethnic group and by regions (at the provincial level).

Ethnic groups

Table 1 (page 271-272) produces two types of information with regard to the ethnic educational level: the illiterate population of each ethnic group and the distribution in different provinces of each ethnic group. The illiteracy rate across ethnic groups varies from 62.88 of Muslim Dongxiang to 1.98 of Muslim Tatar, with the national average 7.75 and that of the Han 8.60. There are six ethnic groups with one of the highest illiteracy rates (around or above 50), Tibetan (47.55), Muslim Salar (49.11), Lhoba (50.79), Muslim Bonan (55.94), Monba (56.21) and Muslim Dongxiang.[6] At the other end of the spectrum, the most literate groups (an illiteracy level of less than 4 percent) are another ten minority populations (1.98 for Muslim Tatar, 2.50 for Muslim Uzbek, 2.68 for Muslim Kazakh, 2.71 for Xibe, 2.86 for Korean, 3.06 for Hezhe, 3.46 for Daur, 3.48 for Oroqen, 3.64 for Russian, and 3.81 for Ewenki). However, the number of ethnic groups with an illiteracy rate higher than that of the national average is 40 (who amount to 70.78 percent of the national minority population), and the average rate is 23.01, which is about three times higher than the national level 7.75. In the meantime, the average illiteracy for the minority population as a whole is 17.86, which is more than twice as high than that for the Han.

The most literate ethnic groups are largely concentrated in Xinjiang in far northwest China or in Heilongjiang, Jilin or Liaoning in northeast China (the

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[6] Compared to the six groups, all other ethnic groups have a significantly lower illiteracy rate than 50 percent, i.e. from about 30 percent to 2 percent.

former Manchukuo), or in the Inner Mongolian Region, and to a lesser extent, in Gaungxi and Guizhou. Possible reasons cited in the literature for the relatively high achievement of these groups include that tradition of modern education and at the same time possess high socio-economic status, for instance, Tatar, Uzbek, Russian, Daur and Korean; some have rapidly enhanced educational performance to a high level with the special aid of the state due to the relatively easy manageability of ethnic communities that have a small population such as Oroqen and Hezhe (Ma and Wang 2002; Dongfang Minzu Wang); some are much sinicised, for example Zhuang.[7] On the contrary, minority groups with a higher illiteracy rate than the national average are substantially settled in western regions, amongst whom the six most illiterate ethnic minority groups are primarily distributed in Qinghai, Gansu and Tibet. The three Muslim groups are settled in the borderland areas between Qinghai and Gansu while the other two small groups (less than 10,000 populace), Monba and Lhoba, live along the border regions between Tibet and India. The largest group among the six, the Tibetans, are widely spread in the Tibet Autonomous Region and the vicinities in its neighbouring provinces, Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan.

Lamontagne (1999) conducted a survey in which he divides ethnic groups into four phases with regard to illiteracy by examining the 1982 level of illiteracy and the degree of progress made between 1982 (the third national census) and 1990 (the fourth national census): (1) the Low-slow phase; (2) the Low-fast phase; (3) the High-fast phase; and (4) the High-slow phase. Here the 'low-high' division refers to the 1982 level of illiteracy, and the 'slow-fast' distinction indicates the degree of progress made between the two censuses. The ethnic groups at the Low-fast and High-fast phases are 'the moderately advanced nationalities (i.e. ethnic

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[7] According to Yuan Shaofen (1991. Cited in Songben 2003:30), the largest minority group, *Zhuang* people, did not have the consciousness of belonging to the Zhuang ethnic group but were being sinicised when the CCP came to power and embarked upon its 'Ethnic Identification Project' over 50 years ago. Dreyer (1976:269) further points out that Zhuang ('Chuang' in her spelling) had also had indigenous communist movement of some strength. This may partially be able to explain Zhuang's educational performance. Also see Goodman (2002) and Mackerras (2004). However, this is not the only case among the minority population, particularly in non-western regions, where minorities have long lived and communicated with Han that led to their sinicisation, for example the She in Fujian and the Tujia in Hunan (whose illiteracy rates are 11.81 and 11.71 that are very close to that of the Han). Given the status as the first minority autonomous region, a relatively high educational level among the Mongolians in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region is also understandable.

groups)' who 'have made significant progress during the 1980s towards catching up with the most advanced nationalities' (ibid.:147). The High-slow phase indicates that educational development approaches a ceiling or saturation point. The Low-slow phase points to the situation in which 'although the least advanced nationalities have made some progress, the gap separating them from the moderately advanced nationalities has widened' (ibid.). As a result of a comparison, the four communities at the Low-slow phase in Lamontagne's survey (ibid.:146), Salar, Tibetan, Bonan and Dongxiang, are still among the most illiterate populations in the 2000 census as can be seen from above.[8] This is to say, from a developmental perspective, the four groups still perform poorly.

Province-level territories

In 2000, the illiteracy rate across province-level territories varied from 4.93 in Beijing to 47.25 in Tibet, with a national average percentage of 9.08 (see Table 2 on page 273). Among the ten territories with the least illiterate populations (Beijing, Guangdong, Guangxi, Shanxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Hunan, Shanghai, Heilongjiang and Tianjin), none of them are situated in western regions. On the other hand, the highest illiteracy rate (an illiteracy level of 15 percent or more) is found in western regions, Tibet, Qinghai (25.44), Guizhou (19.83), Gansu (19.68), Ningxia (15.72) and Yunnan (15.44). As a whole, these western regions have an average illiteracy rate of 18.87, which is twice higher than the national level.

By and large, the minority population has a higher illiteracy rate than the majority Han across the country, and the minority groups with a higher literacy account for a very small proportion of the minority population. The highest illiterate population are concentrated in western regions, particularly in the Qing-Zang (Qinghai-Tibet) Plateau areas that spread from the border areas between Tibet and India to the borderlands between Qinghai and Gansu provinces.

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[8] Some Chinese scholars distinguish between three types of group by the illiteracy criterion, namely, elimination (*xiaochu xing*), transition (*zhuanhuan xing*) and expansion (*kuozhan xing*). However, the Tibetan, Dongxiang and Salar still fall in the expansion category. For more details see Zhang Tianlu (1995); Zhang and Chen (1995).

Current policies and practices of the education of ethnic minorities

The modern education of ethnic minorities in China has long been recognised as one that is different from ordinary education in Han-dominated regions. The establishment of the Manchurian and Mongolian Higher School (*Man Meng Gaodeng Xuetang*) in 1908, of the Qinghai Mongolian and Tibetan School (*Qinghai Meng Fan Xuetang*) in 1910[9] and of the Mongolian and Tibetan School (*Meng Zang Xuexiao*) in 1913 is regarded as the commencement of higher education (*Gaodeng Jiaoyu*), basic education (*Jichu Jiaoyu*) and secondary education (*Zhongdeng Jiaoyu*) of ethnic minorities in China (Teng and Wang 2001:265-266). This tradition, although underdeveloped during its earliest period for understandable reasons, was taken over and enormously developed by the CCP after it came to power in 1949. With more than fifty years' development, the education of ethnic minorities in China has been to a large extent systematised with various levels as well as forms of schooling for ethnic minority people (ibid.:267-291).

This recognition of difference regarding minority education is derived from the awareness of differences between ethnic minorities and the Han community in terms of history, geographical distribution, socio-economic patterns, and cultural tradition. However, particularities of minority education are essentially deemed to be embodied in some 'special difficulties and problems' that are most lately illustrated in an official government document (Guowuyuan 2002):

> Due to a variety of historical, social, physical, and particularly economic reasons, minority education in our country is still facing some special difficulties and problems. The ideas about education relatively lag behind, educational reform proceeds very slowly, and education lacks strong bases. Popularisation of compulsory education and development of all other types of education are relatively sluggish. Teachers are insufficient in quantity and poor in quality. Inadequate financial investment makes it difficult to improve the conditions for managing schools, therefore the problem for the schooling of students is rather salient, and the pay for teachers is in need of further improvement... In recent years, hostile forces from overseas and religious extremist forces from neighbouring countries collude with domestic nationalistic separatists to create incidents in some minority areas in our country, and to conduct ethnic separatist activities. They try vainly to infiltrate our educational field, to foster ethnic separatist forces, and to contend with us for the next generation.

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[9] *Qinghai Tongshi* considers that the modern education of Mongolian and Tibetan children started in 1911 when *Menggu Banri Xuetang* (Mongolian Half-Day School) was set up in Xining. The school was renamed *Ninghai Mengfan Xuexiao* (*Ninghai* Mongolian and Tibetan School) in 1912 when it started to recruit Tibetan children (Cui, Zhang and Du 1999:803-804).

This assessment of the difficulties facing minority education, ranging from historical, social, cultural, economic to political and ideological aspects, from foreign forces to domestic separatists, is in essence continuous with and a development of the CCP's earlier assessment fifty years ago, upon which it started to build up its policy for minority education (see, for example, Teng and Wang 2001:292-297). The main difference is the underlying objective of minority education. Whereas the old objective targeted nurturing minority cadres largely with the aim of building state stability and national unity, the new objective under the reform and opening-up policy is more focused on fostering human capital, i.e. personnel in science, technology and management, as well as cadres.

In the Party-state's attempt to realise its goal for minority education, preferential policies (*youhui zhengce*) are at the centre of the official agenda. These policies range from material support to cultivation of minority personnel. Bringing more financial investment in western minority regions is advocated. It also encourages introducing different types of schools in accordance with the distinctiveness of minority education. This is especially characterised by the establishment of minority schools (*minzu xuexiao*) that recruit minority students with a curriculum tailored for them. Some other types of school or class are also in place such as the mobile school for nomadic minority children and the girl-only teaching class for Muslim girls. Furthermore, there are also 13 higher educational institutes for ethnic minorities (minority universities or colleges or *minzu yuanxiao*, which originally aims to cultivate minority cadres) and 95 higher institutes that are located in minority autonomous territories with a significant proportion of minority students (Guojia Minwei & Guojia Tongjiju 2000).

Except for government departments for ethnic minority affairs at the national, provincial and local levels, the state has also established sections of minority education in national, provincial and local governments that take particular responsibility for minority education. Meanwhile, provinces with a more developed economy and modern education (or 'culture' in many public discourses), especially those in eastern regions, are required to give aid to minority concentrated western regions through material and/or personnel support, or running minority schools or classes for minority children. Cultivation of

minority teachers is also a priority in helping minority education given the high demand for qualified bilingual educators in different school subjects in minority schools. In addition, minority students enjoy special treatment in enrolment. They have priority in getting admitted if the results of their college entrance examinations are the same as or relatively lower than, mainstream Han students (Guojia Jiaowei & Guojia Minwei 1992; Guowuyuan 2002; Jiaoyubu 1986, 1995, 1998; Minzu Jiaoyu Si 1992; Minzu Weiyuanhui 2001; Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui 2004; Teng and Wang 2001; Xinwen Bangongshi 2005).[10]

Recognition of the particularities of minority education also means recognition of minority cultures and languages, which are essential in considering the management of minority education. Therefore, bilingual education has long formed a key part of minority education, which involves the fields of teaching, examination and compilation and translation of textbooks (Teng and Wang 2001:342-353). After fifty years' experiment and exploration, bilingual education has gradually developed three basic models: instruction in the minority language plus the subject of Chinese, instruction in Chinese plus the subject of the minority language, and a gradual transfer of the medium of instruction from the minority language to Chinese. As a result, there are in total more than 10,000 schools nationwide that have employed 21 minority writing systems for their bilingual education (Minzu Jiaoyu Si 2002:205-206). Minority students in theory are allowed to sit college entrance examinations in their minority languages. If students from minority schools received education in their minority languages and also want to enter a university or an academic department of a higher educational institute in minority autonomous regions where the medium of instruction is the minority language, the local government is responsible for setting examinations questions in the minority language for these students. If students of minority schools would like to enter a mainstream university (*putong gaoxiao*) with Chinese as the medium of instruction, they should take nationally uniform college entrance examinations. In this case, the examination of Chinese, though set particularly for minority students, should be sat in Chinese. Meanwhile, the

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[10] *Guojia Jiaowei* (The National Education Commission) is the former name of *Jiaoyu Bu* (The Ministry of Education).

examinations of other subjects can be taken in the minority language (Teng and Wang 2001:344-345).

With the Ministry of Education taking the lead, several inter-provincial cooperative teams were established to co-compile textbooks in the minority writing systems (Mongolian, Tibetan, Kazakh and Korean) that are coupled with three committees for examining textbooks (in Tibetan, Mongolian and Korean). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has also set down the syllabus for the subject of Chinese in minority schools with a lower requirement for minority students. The general principles in textbook compilations and translations lie in requirements to consider four aspects: ideology, scientism, ethnic peculiarities and regional peculiarities. In terms of ideology, textbooks should serve to educate students with socialism, communism and patriotism. The requirement for scientism mainly refers to the function of textbooks to help the minority population in their socio-economic development. Moreover, textbooks should embody distinctiveness of minority areas and cultures (Minzu Jiaoyu Si 2002:206; Teng and Wang 2001:346-349). The four aspects are actually also the principles for minority education in general.

The concerns and objectives shaping minority education policies and practices

Understanding minority education policies and practices necessitates an understanding of the concerns and objectives that shape them. This section aims to broaden the examination of state policies by focusing on the status of minority cultures in education. It firstly looks at the present concerns and objectives of the Party-state, and then briefly illustrates the trajectories of state policies on bilingual education and the religious issue in education over the last decades.

The present concerns and objectives

Minority education has developed for over fifty years since the CCP came to power. So far as its current landscape is concerned, perhaps the most salient feature of minority education policy is that it is shaped by a fear that ethnic and religious allegiances may undermine the capacity of minority people to be loyal

political and cultural citizens of the Chinese nation-state. For the government official, the difficulty in education in China is in rural areas, and in particular in minority areas (Jiaoyu Bu 2002). This is embedded in the reality that the ethnic issue (*minzu wenti*, lit. ethnic question) highly intertwines with the religious issue (*zongjiao wenti*, lit. religious question) in education in most minority areas.[11] This applies particularly to West China, where Muslim and Tibetan areas are thought to harbour 'violent and terrorist forces, religiously extreme forces and ethnic divisive forces' that are regarded as a particular threat to the unity of the nation, and the safety, stability, peace and order of the state (Renmin Ribao Shelun 2001).[12]

A concern for diluting those kinds of knowledge bases that threaten to produce alternative forms of cultural citizenship has caused educational planners to separate out religion from popular education. One way in which this occurs is that Party functionaries educate the masses in general, and school students in particular, about atheism, materialism and scientism, and encourage citizens to establish a scientistic view towards the world and religion so as to consciously resist feudal superstition, cult (*xiejiao*, lit. evil or pernicious doctrine) and ethnic secession (Jiaoyu Bu 2002; Jiaoyu Bu Bangong Ting and Guojia Minwei Bangong Ting 1999; Guowuyuan 2002; Li Dezhu 2002; Renmin Ribao Shelun 2001). In this light, the only religion-related content in textbooks is an introduction to the origin of religion. This introduction mainly serves to take religion as a target of criticism in the curriculum – that religion should not be regarded as a positive element in terms of social progress, but, rather, a backward one that will ultimately wither away (Lishi 2001:116).[13] Nevertheless, the

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[11] In his discussion of state policies of ethnic minorities in Eastern Europe, Kymlicka (2001) also illustrates the intersection between the ethnic issue and the religious issue, and how this affects state policies.

[12] Dreyer argues that the ethnic issue or 'the minorities problem' is essentially a problem of integration that constitutes four concerns in Chinese policymaking: defence, economic and social well-being, and national pride (1976:3-4). This concise insight into the whole national policy system towards ethnic minorities can serve as a general background of my analysis of government policies in educational and cultural dimensions, through which issues of security, socio-economic well-being and national ideology of propaganda come to light. For detailed information of Chinese policies towards ethnic minorities from imperial to communist times, see Dreyer.

[13] While the CCP believes that religion is an historical phenomenon that follows an emergence→development→disappearance law, the Party also holds the same viewpoint towards ethnicity (*minzu*), i.e. *minzu* will eventually disappear. See for example Jiang Zemin (1992), Li Dezhu (2000) and Li Ruihuan (2002). Kymlicka (2001) has also observed that Western political theorists,

Constitution guarantees citizens freedom of religious belief, which in education appears in some religion-related practices like diet, dress, funding of religious schools or even inviting a few religious clergy to act as language teachers (Gladney 1999:84; Mackerras 1999:38, 43-44; Postiglione 1999:6; Teng 2002b:269-270). Even so, this freedom is circumscribed by several 'must-nots', including proscriptions against propagation, instruction or practice of religion in the school, for religion is assumed to be presented by some religious or social groups as a force to contend with the Party-state for younger generations (Jiaoyu Bu 1983).[14] The direct result of this policy that excludes religion from schools or other formal institutions is a marginalisation of religion in both the classroom and the wider society.

Caution on the part of Han pedagogies towards alternative bases of knowledge for cultural citizenship also means that minority education is characterised by chauvinistic approaches towards the language, history and other cultural aspects of the curriculum. Requests for official permission to teach minority languages and literature are assessed according to the perceived threat they pose to the wider national form of cultural citizenship. So when officials have permitted, for example, Tibetan language and literature to be introduced into the curriculum of Tibetan minority schools within the wider context of Mandarin instruction in the core subjects of the school curriculum (in particular at the level of secondary education), Tibetan students are more encouraged to master Chinese in order to facilitate their integration into the mainstream in the long run (see, for example, Ma Rong 2001:231-249, Teng and Wang 2001:311-312). Meanwhile, the demand for a course on Arabic by some Muslim minority schools is rejected by the government. One of the explanations is that the Arabic language has never been the common language of any (Islamic) ethnic minority group in history but used by a minority population as the religious script; in fact, it is suspected that the aim of this demand is to offer the subject of religion in the name of a language lesson (Jiaoyu Bu 1983).

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in a similar fashion, had long viewed ethnicity in much the same way in that it would gradually disappear in the course of modernisation.

[14] The idea of *laïcité* in French public policy is comparable to the policy of religion in China, both place emphasis on state sanction over particularistic interests in and practices of one's own culture (Favell 2001:74-79). A further discussion on this issue of relationships between the state and minority cultures is made in chapters two and nine.

As for the histories of minorities in the curriculum, all ethnic groups are ordered from a primitive to an advanced stage according to minority groups' socio-economic patterns in tune with social evolutionary theory. On this evolutionary scale, there are four types of society, namely, primitive, slavery, feudal and modern.[15] The Han and a few minority groups, for example the Korean and Manchu, two Confucian or sinicised minority groups, are located at the top with most minority groups sequentially following behind; thus the Han nation-state needs to carry out 'civilizing projects' directed at the less civilized minorities (Harrell 1995; Zhongguo Jindai Xiandaishi 2000:148-149; Zhongguo Lishi 1995:187-189).[16]

The history curriculum also allocates significant amount of space to mapping out a kind of constructive or positive interaction between the majority Han and ethnic minorities in history. By doing so, the curriculum attempts to demonstrate that the cultural, economic and political trend through history is collaboration and unity rather than conflict and disunity between ethnic minorities and the Han. This alleged collaboration or unity is conclusively reflected in the influential concept of *duoyuan yiti* (plurality and unity) that was first put forward by the eminent Chinese anthropologist and sociologist Fei Xiaotong in 1988 in a lecture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Fei 1989). The concept attempts to delineate a historical process in which different ethnic groups of distinctive cultures have closely interacted with one another, and as a result evolved a Chinese nation in

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[15] An alternative and also the earlier version of the theory encompassed five types of society, primitive, slavery, feudal, capitalism and socialism/communism. Due to the collapse of the USSR and the Eastern European bloc, and the sluggish economy in socialist society as a whole, it became difficult to insist the advancement of socialism in comparison with capitalism. To combine 'capitalist' and 'socialist' as 'modern' seems to be a compromise that is reflecting the reality of the world development on the one hand, and on the other hand, also not fundamentally violating social evolutionary concept.

[16] A similar evolutionary order is also allegedly found in the educational system of different ethnic groups that corresponds four types of socio-economic patterns, although this is not part of the history curriculum. Education in primitive society is not an independent and special activity that has particular education institutions or full-time teachers. Education in slavery society is characterised by school education that gradually replaces social and family education. Meanwhile education becomes the privilege of the ruling class. Education in feudal society is largely associated with religious education particularly among religious ethnic groups, which is characterised by independent education institutes and full-time teachers. Education in modern society is found among ethnic minority groups that are at the similar social development stage to the Han. This type of education includes education not only in the traditional culture, but also in such subjects as foreign languages, sciences and mathematics (Teng and Wang 2001:88-92).

terms of a unified national culture and identity. 'Chinese' in this context is therefore, a notion that is far broader than the notion of ethnic Han, who at the same time are said to be the nucleus of this unity (or concentration) (*ningju hexin*). In other words, minority history is disproportionately under-represented in the curriculum except for when it is being represented in the context of *duoyuan yiti* or the like.

Instruction in other aspects of minority cultures in the curriculum is even more limited. For example, the only two minority-focused courses run in primary and secondary schools, *Minzu Changshi* (General Knowledge of Ethnic Minorities) and *Minzu Lilun he Minzu Zhengce* (Theories and Policies of Ethnic Minorities) respectively, barely serve as the means of enhancing the awareness of ethnic unity through educating students with a similar concept to *duoyuan·yiti*.[17] On the whole, publicity and education in minority cultures, wherever there is any, is not a systematic instruction or introduction; instead, minority cultures are frequently equated with colourful dress, beautiful dance and song, special dwellings, exotic food, or language and script against the Han culture (Teng et al. 1997), which is thought to be the culmination of various ethnic cultures as a result of the Han being a 'compound of ethnic groups' (*zuqun jiheti*) (Ma Rong 2003a) through Chinese history.[18] As a result, minority cultures are either fragmented and tokenised or politicised in the curriculum as suggested earlier.

A final consideration affecting minority education policy is that the 'troublesome' or 'disloyal' minorities are concentrated in the economically least developed regions of West China (Hu and Wen 2002; Tang 2003). These regions have rural populations and rural-urban inequalities that are above the national average,[19] and a physical environment that is harsh and inhospitable where minorities were, in

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[17] Meanwhile, the two courses are rarely treated seriously by either teachers or students due to their very limited proportion in key examinations, such as national college entrance examinations which are ultimately closely connected with upward social mobility whereby the two courses are not at all. Also see the empirical chapters six, seven and eight.

[18] For more information about the discourse of 'culture' in general sense, and in the notion of 'minority cultures', see chapter four.

[19] According to the fifth national census, the rural population in western China amounts to 72.10% while the percentage of the coastal provinces and municipalities is 42.18% (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong) (Zhongguo Guojia Tongjiju 2000).

history, pushed by the Han who themselves occupied the fertile soil in inland parts (Shen 1995; Zhou 1957). This made the minorities' life harder, and prevented their economy and culture from developing effectively, and in fact has made development more difficult. This history casts a dark shadow on the minorities' mind (Zhou 1957:237). These disadvantages ethnic minorities have suffered were recently highlighted as the 'three backwardnesses' (*sange luohou*) of ethnic minorities by the chairman of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, Li Dezhu, in his summary speech at the latest (fifth) national ethnic minority education working conference (Li Dezhu 2002):

> Compared to the whole country, in particular to the eastern coastal areas, ethnic minorities and minority areas in our country have 'three backwardnesses': the productivity development standard is backward, the cultural development standard is backward, and the people's living standard is backward... These 'three backwardnesses' are all closely connected with the backwardness of the educational development of ethnic minorities and minority areas.

The Party-state is therefore increasingly placing hopes on education to play a key role in 'developing' the West and integrating it with the rest of China. Much of this policy invokes the globally familiar developmental discourse of 'catch up' (*zhuigan*, *ganshang*); it is widely assumed by both the government and the mainstream Han and minorities themselves, as well as western and eastern regions that, if they do not want to be 'phased out' (*taotai*) by the rapidly progressing society, they have to catch up educationally in schools, which in turn, it is believed, will contribute to them catching up economically, ideologically and culturally in the long term.[20]

The trajectories of state policies of bilingual education and the religious issue in education

Indeed, to integrate ethnic minorities into the Chinese nation-state has increasingly come to the core of the government agenda over the past decades. This is usually articulated in the way that every ethnic group would be benighted and so backward if it enclosed and isolated itself from advanced or developed ethnic groups or regions. Ongoing changes of the government policy of bilingual

[20] Harrell (1995) compares three types of civilizing projects carried out respectively by Confucian, Christian and Communist, and shows similarities, differences between them, as well as succession between Confucian theory and Communist theory.

education over the past fifty years particularly reflects a long course in which this ideology develops. Corresponding to the CCP's recognition and accommodation of ethnic minority groups, bilingual education in the early 1950s was much focused upon encouraging that minority schools offer the subject of their own ethnic languages, and further gradually adopt their languages as the medium of instruction in all school subjects. This was a golden age of bilingual education under a new era when the CCP just became the ruling party of China. This policy turned into a radically different direction from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s, when the Party-state deemed that the country had fulfilled the transformation towards socialism and was entering a new phase of thoroughly building up its socialist system. In this light, it was required that minority education should gradually catch up with the mainstream Han education (Teng and Wang 2002:292-319).

In this discourse of catching up, minorities were accused of their peculiarities that were understood as the synonymy of backwardness. This backwardness was believed to be able to overcome by terminating bilingual education so as to melt minorities into the Han. With Mandarin as the only medium of instruction in schools, minorities were presumed to be able to get access to Han culture, which would enrich and advance their own cultures. Following this period there was a correction to the policy of termination of bilingual education although the general principle on the government agenda was still to encourage minorities to master Mandarin so as to 'promote' their cultural level. This ignorance of bilingual education was exacerbated in the following era of the Cultural Revolution that did not come to an end until the mid-1970s. In the first half of 1980s bilingual education was formally included in relevant laws (e.g. the Constitution, the Law of Minority Regional Autonomy), which marked the commencement of another golden age of bilingual education after it had suffered from political and cultural abuse for thirty years. However, from the 1990s a growing number of commentators suggest that education in Chinese be phased in to replace bilingual education at the senior secondary level of minority education (ibid.).

The fluctuation in the government policy concerning bilingual education is an epitome of civilizing missions[21] of the Party-state, and is also the result of a concern with the political threat possibly posed to ethnic unity and state stability. However, the cultural and political concerns are more closely connected to the religious issue in education as suggested earlier. Compared to the language issue that on the surface appears to be more associated to culture or to be a communication tool, religion is always suspected as being responsible for ideological or political wars between religious communities and the CCP. This worry has resulted in strict confinement of religion from the public domain that is evidenced by the fact that religious elements, except for those that appear as an inevitable attachment to bilingual education or as a target of criticism in history textbooks as mentioned earlier, has never been permitted in state education after the Religious Reform (*zongjiao gaige*) in the late 1950s. Abolition of religious buildings and disbanding religious personnel in the Cultural Revolution between 1960s and 1970s further stigmatised and diminished religion and so seriously ruined many religion-centred minority cultures.

Partially reacting against the CCP's repression of religion in the Cultural Revolution, and partially taking advantage of the Party-state's rectification of its chaotic policy of religion in the post-Cultural Revolution era, religion was held up by some religious minority communities as requiring further recognition and promotion in public institutions, in particular in education. This action was itself held up as an example of the interference of religion in school education, which directly led to the introduction of a government document in the early 1980s that, with detailed rules and regulations, stressed again the principle of separating out religion from state education (Jiaoyu Bu 1983). The general state control over religion was tightened up again nationwide, and in minority areas in particular. It has not been loosened up significantly since then and indeed becomes tougher from time to time when the Party-state feels threat from religion (see, for example, Wanwei Wang 2004b).

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[21] On 'civilizing mission', see Harrell's articulation of civilizing projects in chapter four.

By and large, minority cultures as a whole can hardly win proportionate space in education in both cultural and political terms. Meanwhile, the limited contents that are relevant to minority cultures are also aiming at inculcating the kind of ideology of ethnic unity and state stability through 'advancing' minority cultures with Han culture and fostering political loyalty of the minority population to the Party-state via patriotic education. As a whole, it seems to be difficult to foresee whether state sanction over minority cultures will become less strict. In fact, while minority languages are suspected to be precluding the minority population from absorbing advanced Han culture, and further, to be acting as the conveyor of religious education, the control over religion seems to be a determined and constant commitment of the Party-state towards its political ends. This commitment is recently articulated in the slogan of 'guiding religion to adapt to socialism' (*yindao zongjiao yu shehui zhuyi xiang shiying*) (see, for example, Qin Huibin 1994; Wang Zhaoguo 2002). As a result, when the government sets out the principles for minority education, namely, ideology, scientism, ethnic and regional peculiarities, it is much more targeting poverty by introducing economically relevant curriculum to local situations at the expense of minority cultures as shown in the following sections. This economically orientated agenda on the part of the Party-state is very likely, though partly, to aim at distracting the public attention away from hard-to-compromise tensions between the Party-state ideology and minority cultures, which are largely counter-ideology or counter-scientism in the CCP's mind.

The mainstream discourse of minority education

Over the last fifty years since the CCP came to power, one of the most noticeable aspects is the dramatic change of state policy that has affected every aspect of Chinese people's public and private life, negatively or positively. The policy towards minority education and minority people has also experienced similar changes, especially in some 'extreme' periods when minority education suffered huge setbacks (e.g. the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution between the late 1950s and the late 1970s). However, minority education has developed considerably in both quantitative and qualitative terms in the era since the late 1970s when China embarked upon its reform and opening-up policy, which has led minority education to move towards a physiognomy that is more financially

secured, ethnically sensitive and increasingly sophisticated in its (preferential) policies. It is fair to say that the Party-state has made a remarkable effort in promoting the education of ethnic minorities in particular over the past two to three decades through its consistent commitment to minority education. At the same time, many Han dominated better-off provinces together with minority areas have helped to actualise the state's preferential policies through the material and/or personnel support of minority education.

The latest development regarding minority education is that, after fifty years' experiment and exploration, the Ministry of Education sets to draw up '*Zhongguo Shaoshu Minzu Jiaoyu Tiaoli'* (The Ordinance of the Education of Ethnic Minorities in China), which aims to formulate '*Zhongguo Shaoshu Minzu Jiaoyu Fa*' (The Law of the Education of Ethnic Minorities in China) in due course (Xinhua Wang 2002). The work is carried out on the basis of relevant regulations and rules in laws and existing local ordinances of minority education. In the light of the 'Open Up the West' campaign, the National Television Station, the China Central TV Station (CCTV), also put out a new programme of '*Xibu Jiaoyu*' (Education in Western Regions), which aims to draw more attention to helping improve education in western regions, particularly in minority areas (Jiaoyu Bu 2004a). In a word, the minority education policy and practice that is supposed to be developed in the direction of privileging ethnic minorities has in particular been an essential concern at both central and local government levels.

However, the education of ethnic minorities in China, while having made some progress (or even arguably, huge progress in the government discourse), still lags significantly behind the mainstream education, and the gap between ordinary education and minority education (particularly in many western regions) has widened. This is not only reflected in the high illiteracy of ethnic minorities as argued earlier, but also in their high drop-out rate and poor performance in schools (see, for example, Ai, Meng and Postiglione 1995; Minzu Jiaoyu Si 2002; Teng 2002a; Yuan, Yang & Li 2003). Is the lack of finance, facilities, effective management or quality teaching the main causes of the poor performance of minority students? Is inadequate government policy mainly responsible for the unsatisfactory outcomes? Or is it the reluctant attitude among ethnic minorities

themselves towards schooling that is more responsible for the poor educational achievement of the minority population? In what follows I will examine how academics and the public assess and diagnose the poor minority educational performance. 'Academics' and 'the public' are sometimes together termed 'commentators' or 'the mainstream' respectively in this and the next sections – the last term includes both minority and majority members in spite of the fact that it is only used to refer to the ethnic Han elsewhere. However, this category by no means stands for a homogeneous group in spite of the fact that different commentators do share some fundamental conceptions as will be revealed later on. In fact, given the heterogeneity or inconsistency in individual commentators' arguments it is more realistic to distinguish between different viewpoints or approaches that are put forward by different as well as the same commentators rather than between different groups of commentators. Different opinions will be principally labelled as two kinds of approach: integrative and multicultural.

Echoing the government assessment, the academic and public discourse about minority education fundamentally focuses on its sluggishness in comparison with the education in the rest of China, and the widening gap between both (Teng and Wang 2001:287-288). This sluggishness is claimed to be found at all levels of minority education, from pre-school to higher education (ibid.:258, 285-286). This is in particular embodied in several low and high rates with regard to minority education: the educated population rate is low and so the illiteracy is high; the enrolment, remaining and graduation rates are low while the drop-out and repetition rates are high; the proportion of the minority population in vocational and higher education is small (Lin, Jin and Chen 1990:528-529; Teng 2002b; Teng and Wang 2001:85-286). Although there are more than ten minority groups that have a higher educational level than the Han, the lower minority educational achievement is nevertheless an overwhelming concern, which is evident in the very limited attention paid to successful minority groups in academic discussions that may serve as inspiration in helping failed minority groups. Alternatively, these minority populations are simplistically blamed for their 'backward' modes of thinking against the minority groups with high

achievement who are portrayed to possess modern or sinicised education as can be seen elsewhere in the chapter.[22]

This is perhaps in part because all parties involved – policy-makers, educators and scholars – consciously or unconsciously have been aware of the tremendous variety in the cultural tradition, socio-economic patterns and geographical distribution, and relatedly, physical environment of different ethnic minority groups, which are usually believed to lead different minority groups to various educational outcomes. In other words, minorities in western regions (apart from Xinjiang) are considerably disadvantaged compared to minority or majority groups in the rest of China. This disadvantage is attributed by the mainstream to the physical environment, socio-economic development level and cultural tradition of these minority groups in comparison with those of other minority or majority groups, which at the same time are evaluated as unfavourable conditions or circumstances for education as will be revealed below (Chen 1998; Li, Cai, Li & Wang 1994; Li and Wang 2002; Liu 1994; Ma, Siqin, Ma, Su & Ma 1996; Wang and Liu 2002; Yang 1996; Yuan Xiaoyuan 2003; Zhang and Huang 1996).

As a result of the domination of the western minorities in both quantity and geographical distribution among the whole minority population in the country, minority education on the whole appears to generate ineffective outcomes in spite of the growing investment of various forms from the government. This ineffectiveness is exacerbated under the devolution of responsibility for education from the central government to local governments that started some ten or twenty years ago because minority regions severely lack the financial resources to support local education. The direct consequences are that the type of school that is highly costly due to the hard manageability of the physical environment (e.g. in

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[22] To explore what hides behind educational underachievement through looking at the successful cases is a valuable perspective that has been proved by many studies, for example, about the East Asian students in the US, Chinese and Indians in the UK, and some minority students in China (see, for example, Harrell and Ma 1999; Strategy Unit 2003; Woo 2002; Xinwen Bangongshi 2005). However, the focus of my research is not on educational achievement but the cultural exclusion of ethnic minorities, both low and high educational achievers, as argued in chapter one. Therefore I discuss both successful and failed cases in the empirical chapters that are based on a common ground around the relationship between education and social mobility. In addition, as I argue here and in some other chapters (e.g. chapters one, two and nine) that it can run the risk of blaming victims when we take successful cases as a point of comparison to discuss failed ones.

mountainous areas where minority populations are widely but sparsely distributed) has to face closure; numerous minority schools have to run in extreme conditions including poor quality facilities or over-crowded classrooms, or even have to give classes in the open air throughout the whole year. The difficulties also mean that the management of minority schools always faces some dilemmas such as that between opening more small-scale schools in order to facilitate schooling of minority children in different locations, and having sizeable schools in limited selected locations so as to reduce the cost of school management (ibid.).

The integrative approach

All in all, the backwardness of minority education has led some commentators to describe an ironical situation in which the minority population live in poverty on the one hand, and on the other hand, live alongside rich natural resources. They hence are labelled as the people who are suffering from poverty with a gold bowl in their hands (Piao 2002; Zhu and Zhang 1996). While it is said that the inadequacy of minority education and the poverty that the minority population have long suffered from are to some extent the responsibility of state policy or of the sluggishness of the local economy, the backwardness in the thinking modes of people is highlighted as the fundamental element that is responsible for the poor minority educational achievement (Lin, Jin and Chen 1990:531). This is first described by academic commentators in terms of ethnic minorities' low view of education that leads to their lack of enthusiasm and motivation for education. This is also confirmed by my qualitative data in spite of the different explanations given to explain the phenomenon by the mainstream and by my minority respondents respectively (as can be seen here and in subsequent chapters). This inadequate evaluation of education among minorities is believed to be embedded in their entrenched environment, both physical and cultural, which are intertwined.

It is said (Chen 1998; Li, Cai, Li & Wang 1994; Li and Wang 2002; Liu 1994; Ma, Siqin, Ma, Su & Ma 1996; Wang and Liu 2002; Yang 1996; Yuan Xiaoyuan 2003; Zhang and Huang 1996) that ethnic minorities usually live in isolated areas where they seldom have opportunities to make contact with the outside world, and therefore are unfamiliar with the kind of modernising environment in which

education plays an important part. On the contrary, school education seems to have little to do with their routine, usually, self-sufficient life. Meanwhile, the sluggish local economy has forced them to prioritise their needs for labour over other things so as to hopefully ensure a basic living standard. This also means that the requirement for more labour always leads to a high birth rate that usually aggravates their poverty. Further, poverty is also said to make minorities easily distracted by the commercial business in a marketising era in that minority children are more likely to become uninterested in study or even drop out because they need (or 'want') to earn money. All these elements, according to commentators, form a vicious circle around poverty, limited education and more family members. The disadvantaged status is largely traced back by the academic to the backward socio-economic patterns of the ethnic minority population that range from primitive to feudal society before the CCP brought them into the advanced socialist society (ibid.). However, unlike these commentators, my minority respondents explicitly or implicitly argue in the later chapters that policies and practices of the social system are more responsible for the failure in getting minorities out of this vicious circle.

The isolation of ethnic minorities is also thought to be a result of their cultural and in particular, religious tradition which is held to be responsible for their disengagement from education and their self-enclosedness. Minority communities have invested and are still investing considerable amounts of money and time into religion, which has helped to establish numerous resplendent and magnificent monasteries or mosques standing alongside collapsing school buildings. The piety of the minority population also means that more school-aged children have been sent to monasteries or mosques rather than schools. Some religions such as Islam are accused of being patriarchal because it is against sending girls to mixed-sex modern schools, and requires girls, if they are in schools, to leave school at a rather young age in order to get married. At a deeper and more fundamental level, religion is seen as encouraging believers to obey and preserve tradition, which leads its disciples to becoming entrenched and so resisting other cultures and cultural innovations. Tibetan Buddhism is in particular believed to diminish its disciples' willingness to compete in the world outside of their religious

community and to be content with their (impoverished) status quo (ibid.).[23] However, this attribution of minorities' lack of enthusiasm for education in schools and, relatedly, for modernisation in the wider society, is explained rather differently by some other commentators and minorities as will be seen in the subsequent sections and chapters. They suggest that minorities' turn to religion is largely on account of their lack of access to education or of irrelevance of education to minorities' local socio-economic situation or their cultural values.

While ethnic minorities are criticised for their backward thinking, their intelligence in schooling is also called into question in comparison with their Han peers, although it is claimed that their intelligence standard could be improved through appropriate training (Meng Liang 2002). Minority students are presumed to have encountered obstacles in the fields of memorisation, concentration, analytical ability and comprehension (Ding 1997). These obstacles could be caused by the physical environment on account of the reality that the regions that minorities live in either cannot provide a wide range of food for a balanced diet or have adverse circumstances which ruin their health. The obstacles could also be caused by their human environment or cultural background, which is closely associated with their life style – their closed, isolated life coupled with inter-marriage and bad hygienic habits, as well as their language and religion (Chen Xinyu 1998; Ding Yueya 1997; Zhang Chuansui 1996; Zhang Yi 1994). Furthermore, their physical and human environments are thought to separately or simultaneously affect their ways of parenting, child-rearing and pre-school preparation which are usually unlikely to nurture merits for schooling. As a result, minority children, who are usually from a nomadic or agricultural environment, tend to be sluggish in developing the kind of ability in abstraction, analysis, or comprehension of academic concepts (Deng 1997; Ding 1997; Meng Liang 2002). Further, their background is also said to affect their personality which is more likely to suffer from low self-esteem, narrow-mindedness and inflexibility

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[23] This is actually a view of rural Tibetans, particularly of those in remote areas where they rarely have contact with the outside world and so lack frames of reference. This is said to prevent them from engaging with what is happening in the outside world but to maintain them on their traditionally routine life track. In the case of urbanised elites, to remain a religious sentiment is more driven by a need of ethno-religious identity that is expected to provide them with a sense of security in a foreign (Han or otherwise) cultural environment. For detailed information, see chapter six.

or stillness in modes of thinking (ibid.). The implication here is that the lack of intelligence caused by both physical and cultural environments is significantly responsible for poor minority school performance.

Furthermore, the negative impacts of state preferential policies on minority education are pointed out by many commentators. The policies are criticised for fostering an inclination among minorities towards waiting for, relying upon and requesting government aid such as special policies and treatment, and extra funding (Minzu Jiaoyu Si 2002; Tang 2002). The preferential policy in the enrolment of ethnic minority students is said to form a vicious circle of lower entry requirements, laxity in learning and the limited academic outcomes of minority students, which eventually leads them to a situation of having a certificate but no quality (*you wenping mei shuiping*) (Li, Li, Zheng & Yang 1994; Tang 2002).[24] As a result, many educators argue that the system of separating minority schools from ordinary schools should be abolished.[25] This not only would create an environment of healthy competition, make education resources be used more effectively or teachers more professional, but would also enhance mutual understanding between and self-reflexivity of students of different ethnic groups so as to promote ethnic unity (Bai Jierui 1994:35).[26]

The multicultural approach

Whereas many diagnoses of poor minority educational performance are directed at minority community forces, awareness is also growing among some academics

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[24] The kind of schools discussed here is minority schools. This reflects a consensus amongst the government, academic and public that minority education equates the education in minority schools. In fact, minority education, or more precisely, the education of ethnic minorities, should also include the education of minority children in ordinary or mainstream schools given the fact that many ordinary or mainstream schools in minority areas have a large number of minority students as evidenced in my qualitative research case. Relevant information is also presented in chapter three.

[25] Separate minority school is also a controversial issue in many other countries, for example, in Britain and France. This is particular true in the case of separate religious schools, which is usually regarded as promotion of segregation, denomination, patriarchy or inequality over cohesion, secularity, democracy or equality. More information of the debate around separate (faith) schools in the UK can be consulted in such works as Chadwick (2001), Connolly (1992), Dobson (2002), Dwyer (2000), Halstead (1994), Haw (1995), McLaughlin (1992), Modood and May (2001), Osler and Hussain (1995), Rex (1986), Watson (2000), Yuval-Davis (1992).

[26] Relatedly, a negative by-product of preferential policies is said to be that these policies have seduced numerous Han to change their ethnicity to minority, which has brought about chaos in implementing state policy and exercising social justice (see, for example, Min 1996).

that the nationally uniform curriculum has been examined and criticised for its failure to be responsive to differences in locality and ethnicity in minority areas. The curriculum is said to be irrelevant to the local socio-economic situation in two ways. Firstly, it is not designed in accordance with the present natural, social and economic conditions of minority areas, which makes the majority of minority students no longer accustomed to, good at, or keen to undertake manual work after returning to their home-village as a result of failure in college entrance examinations, and thus are regarded by their community as useless. This once again reminds us of those failed examinees in the civil service examinations who were unwilling or unable to engage in commerce or physical labour in imperial China. Therefore, confidence in school education among (particularly rural) minority communities has significantly declined, and to send children to school becomes pointless and merely involves spending time and money (Ba 1998; Guo 2003; Li, Li, Zheng & Yang 1995). The irrelevance of the curriculum also refers to the situation in which it is divorced from historically shaped socio-economic patterns of ethnic minorities, which are usually at a backward stage by a social evolutionary criterion. In other words, minority communities are not fully in concert with the advanced socialist system in either social or economic terms though it is the case in political terms (Ba 1998; Piao 2002). The failure in response to local socio-economic patterns and development in the curriculum is primarily generated from the Chinese Han tradition of an elitist approach to education as illustrated in chapter four that, in its contemporary version, narrowly focuses upon college entrance examinations. This educational interest has long ignored vocational education that supposedly should be tailored in tune with various local socio-economic situations (Ba 1998; Guo 2003; Li, Li, Zheng & Yang 1995; Sun Yi 1997; Yang 2001).

In spite of some (serious) deficiencies, vocational education is portrayed to be a kind of *suzhi jiaoyu* (quality education) that has been widely welcomed as a new concept over the last years. *Suzhi jiaoyu* aims to cultivate the kind of all-round people as argued in chapter four who are, in one important sense, capable of making a contribution to the socio-economic development of their communities with what they have learnt in schools after returning there from schools (Ba 1998; Guo 2003; Li, Li, Zheng and Yang 1995; Meng, Qi & Kan 1998; Sun Yi 1997;

Teng et al. 1997; Yang 2001). If education is managed to meet the requirements of the masses rather than those of the elite, grassroots people are proved to be far more enthusiastic to send their children to school rather than to keep them at home to help with family labour or family-run business, or to send them to religious institutes (Cairangcuo, Chen & Liu 1997; Meng, Qi & Kan 1998; Meng Liang 2002). On the other hand, to take into consideration children's life experience, nomadic or agricultural, and related cognitive patterns will also significantly facilitate their learning in schools. In this fashion, what is more important is that the view that minority children are intellectually inferior will also largely be corrected in both majority and minority communities (Ba 1998; Cui 1995).

To pay close attention to local situations also requires taking account of various ethnic minority cultures in the curriculum, which is interrelated and sometimes overlaps with the local socio-economic pattern and development. That is to say that the curriculum not only serves as an instrument to help create human capital, but also as a tool that guarantees and enhances the cultural well-being of different ethnic minority groups. This is especially associated with whether or not, or to what extent, minority languages and religions are provided with reasonable space in the curriculum. In this light, influenced by their western counterparts, Chinese scholars have developed a discourse of multicultural education. Since the state guarantees minorities freedom to use their own languages in relevant laws, bilingual education has been substantially practised in a great number of minority schools across the country as demonstrated earlier. Nevertheless, as some researchers rightly point out, bilingual education is far from a perfect system, and needs to resolve several crucial tensions, such as the tension between a high demand for bilingual textbooks and a serious lack of expenditure, bilingual teachers and reading materials, and the tension between efficiency and effectiveness in learning brought by bilingual education for minority students, and decreasing opportunities of using minority languages in the wider world (Teng 2001, 2003; Teng and Wang 2002; Teng et al. 1997). However, bilingual education is considered to be fundamentally important in providing minorities with more confidence in valuing their own cultures and their intellectual quality (Teng et al. 1997; Ma & Xiao 2002), although recent developments show that

advocacy of popularising Chinese Mandarin has gradually become strong as can be seen earlier (Ma Rong 2001, 2003b, 2004; Jiaoyu Bu 2004b, 2005).

Contrary to substantial and detailed arguments and practices in bilingual education, the religious issue has rarely been discussed to the same extent or in the same depth as the debate of the curriculum, despite some vague advocacy of (re)introducing religion into education (see, for example, Ding Hong 1991; Ma Jinhu 1998). More often, religion is assessed by academics in tune with the Party-state's policies that religion cannot interfere with education, and at the same time, religious leaders may be encouraged to help with recruitment of students from their community or to raise funds for education, or may become teachers of the minority language in some understaffed schools (Liu 1994; Ningxia Jiaowei 1998; Teng 2002b:269). The religious issue is particularly complex in the Muslim case although this is not necessarily more sensitive than in the cases of other religious communities such as the Tibetan. The complexity of the Muslim case is firstly a legacy of the gap between Islamic tradition and Chinese culture, the conflict between (in particular) the dynastic regimes and Muslims in history as portrayed in chapter four, and a worry among Muslims that to study in the mainstream school will lead to sinicisation (see also chapter seven) (Bai Yan 1997; Ma, Siqin, Ma, Su & Ma 1996; Ma Jinhu 1998; Ma Mingliang 1999).

Further, this complexity is also a reflection of diverse dimensions in the Muslim case of education that are entangled with or contradictory to one another. As mentioned above, state policy does not permit Arabic teaching in minority schools. Hui Muslims, as Chinese speakers, have no need for bilingual education, which may mean that they cannot take advantage of the equal preferential policy in college entrance examinations available to other ethnic minority groups (Ding Hong 1991). On the other hand, the state runs or supports some Islamic schools which provide students with substantial Islamic knowledge and the Arabic language, including the schools of this kind for Muslim women (Ma Jinhu 1998; Ma Qiang 2003). This partially seems to be a kind of compensation for the absence of Islamic knowledge and the Arabic language in Muslim minority schools. As a result, Muslim minority schools (particularly those for Hui) hardly function as more than a mainstream school with a Halal canteen (Sun Yaoquan

1997). Politicisation of religious education and discrimination against Muslims in employment, school enrolment and conscription with the excuse of being difficult to handle special customs are also believed to have cast a dark shadow on the Hui enthusiasm and motivation for education (see also chapter seven) (Kong 2001; La 1995).

Ignorance of local socio-economic needs or the exclusion of minority cultures from the curriculum also means that minority education has little to do with minority communities. That is to say that schools are not keen to get minority communities involved in education when attempting to develop a more responsive curriculum so as to attract more minority people to schools, although it is not fair to say there are no schools or government officials that have made some effort in this direction. However, mainstream attempts to include communities in the development and improvement of the curriculum so as to serve local minorities are very limited or narrowly focused in the way that it is more instrumentally directed, i.e. pays more attention to vocational education (Ren Yugui 1994), or to certain religious leaders who are encouraged to help with recruitment, fund-raising or language teaching as mentioned earlier. Hence, it is not difficult to understand why the limited textbooks that pay regard to ethnic minorities merely provide skin-deep knowledge about minority cultures, which tend to confuse students with their inappropriate content (Jin Dongping 1998:38).

Evaluation

The minority population of China is diverse in cultural tradition and socio-economic development, as well as in educational level. However, the majority of the minority population have poorer educational performance in comparison with the ethnic majority Han, which is, to a large extent, a trend that has persisted historically. This is particularly the case with the minority population in West China. Nevertheless, this is not always comprehensible given the Party-state's commitment to increasingly sophisticated preferential policies and ethnic sensitivity in managing minority education on the one hand, and on the other hand, nationwide aid in the form of finance and/or personnel particularly over the past two or three decades.

Researchers, policy-makers and educators agree that the inhospitable physical environment and sluggish economy make the management of minority education difficult and at the same time particularly costly. Ironically, in some cases minorities are reported to be unwilling to send their children to schools even when the government or school rewards them in cash or by means of other material forms if they do so. Moreover, some minority parents would even 'employ' some people to go to school instead of their own children by paying these people money (Yuan, Yang & Li 2003:45). In sharp contrast to this, it is widely reported (and a subject of criticism) that some minority families would rather make a donation to their religious institutions from their very limited budget. In other words, minorities' reluctance or even resistance to education is more shocking to the public and academics than the harsh physical environment they are living in, or the sluggishness of their local economy. Due to this, along with facts such as the withdrawal of their children from schools for family business or marriage when children are still quite young, the public and academics conclude that minority people are backward. Therefore, whilst the mainstream claims that what needs to be changed is the physical environment as well as the socio-economic situation, essentially it is people's modes of thinking that are in urgent need of change. This mainstream concern about the backwardness of minority thinking modes is typically reflected in its discourse of *suzhi*, quality (to name a few, Fei 1989:34-35; Lin Yaohua 1990:528-531; Teng 2002b:263; Wang Geliu 2001:158. Also see chapter four).

Indeed, it is fashionable for critics as well as supporters of the minority population to label minorities as a people or labour force of low quality. This view is also echoed by the mainstream and some minority members I interviewed as can be seen in the empirical chapters. However, this fashion is not only derived from what the mainstream has seen of minorities, but more rooted in the kind of concept they have that is shaped in line with the Party-state's ideology, namely, social evolution. Academics take the concept of social evolution so comfortably for granted that no research bothers to question its validity or applicability to widely varying contexts. The result in discourse construction is that the backwardness of the minority population can be easily located in terms of the past or history of minority people themselves. Meanwhile, in examining the

responsibilities for the poor minority performance, the social system that has primarily shaped education policies and practices has been largely singled out. This is to say that academic discussions that do not comply with the convention set out by the Party-state become taboo, of which the Party-state itself is at the core. One salient example is the mainstream attitude towards religion in education that is most likely to either parrots the Party-state's policy by insisting on the poisonous or primitive character of religion that is believed to be distracting minorities, or evades the issue at all, as illustrated earlier. In the meantime little research is carried out as to why the school has failed to win students in this 'culture war' with religion. As a result, discussions of minority education are largely concentrated on practical issues such as bilingual education, demography, economic well-being, social mobility or occupational pattern.[27]

The absence of a consideration of the social system from public discussions also means that the lower socio-economic development stage at which the minority population presumably used to be located is believed to have acted and being acting as an essential obstacle ahead of their progressive course. This presumption has actually laid a basis for the academic to place the minority population in a primordial position that is primitive and against modernisation, and so to prove the necessity of enlightening minorities through modern education. This enlightenment is not only in the field of knowledge or skills transmission that aims to cultivate human capital, but also, in a more fundamental sense, in the field of transmission of culture, i.e. advanced thinking modes and moral standards that is believed to serve as a tool to transform the minority population and so their socio-economic situation in the long term. This is particularly useful when the two fields are difficult to reconcile with each other. So whilst Tibetans are criticised as being poisoned by religion so deeply that they are very passive in participating in the market economy (*shichang jingji*) or modernisation more generally, Muslims are rebuked for favouring material benefits by prioritising commerce (*shengyi*) or money-making (*zhuanqian*) at the expense of their children's education. In this context, Tibetans are thought to be unaware of the importance of education for the modernising society that is particularly

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[27] In fact, these practical issues are inseparable from the way in which minority cultures are treated as argued in chapter one. Also see chapters two, six and seven.

characterised by the commercial economy. Meanwhile, Muslims, though economically active, are denounced as short-sighted profiteers and so are in need of education for enhancing moral standards in order to redress the imbalance between economy and morality. This is much the same as the mainstream narratives of Muslims and Tibetans illustrated in chapter eight.

More examples of this kind are taken by the mainstream to justify the necessity of educating minorities of 'being benighted', 'short-sight' or 'low moral standard'. Whilst the public and academics emphasise that education is the main means of upward social mobility so that minorities should value education if they want to achieve the mobility goal, some minority college graduates are also criticised for their tendency to seek a better-off life in China proper, where they studied, instead of returning to serve in their hometowns. A similar case is also found in the public and academic criticism of the kind of minorities who become less keen on schooling when they have realised that education will no longer necessarily lead them to cadre or public servant positions as the state terminates the policy of allocation of jobs to college graduates. The tendency to having more children in minority communities is also considered to be one of the main factors that has caused poverty though the fact that a large labour force is needed for a basic living standard in most minority areas is admitted. The public and academics conclude that the minority community is in a vicious circle of '*yue qiong yue sheng, yue sheng yue qiong*' (the more impoverished, the more children (needed); the more children (they have), the more impoverished (they become)). 'Vicious circle' is a preferred vernacular phrase in the public and academic description of the minority population as portrayed here and earlier. To name a few more examples of 'vicious circle', poverty-illiteracy-high birth rate; religiousness-stubbornness-stupidity; backwardness of education-backwardness of economy-backwardness of culture (Teng 2002b:263-264). As a result, the concept of 'vicious circles' is most likely to lead to the blame of the minority population for whom poverty is a life style.

It is believed that one major way that minorities can be effectively educated is to encourage them to acquire Mandarin, which is believed to serve their socio-economic needs that are presumed to help achieve social mobility in the long term

(Ma Rong 2001, 2003a, 2004). In the meantime, advocacy of a good command of Mandarin may be more driven by the assumption of the backwardness of the minority population who are still living in the shade of their past primitive societies. This is to say that Mandarin will serve as a fundamental way through which the minority population will hopefully enhance its quality as a result of receiving advanced thinking modes, moral standards, and science and technology knowledge conveyed by Mandarin (Halike and Muhabaiti 1997). This degradation of the minority population has also been found in the advocates of multiculturalism. Unlike the integrative approach that focuses on self-improvement of the minority population, the multicultural approach justly points out the irrelevance of the curriculum to both cultural tradition and socio-economic development of minority areas as illustrated above. Nonetheless, this approach, like the integrative one, equally claims without questioning that the keenness on religion or commercial business among the minority population is a result of their lower cultural level, or specifically, of them lacking advanced modes of thinking.

In fact, because of the leaving out of the responsibilities that the social system should take, there are inevitable difficulties or contradictions in criticism of the minority population. In other words, it is hard to make convincing cause-effect connections between numerous symptoms diagnosed by the mainstream for minority education as can be seen from many examples given above. This is to say that, in explanations of the poor educational performance of minorities, arbitrariness makes up a striking feature of the public and academic discourse. As a consequence, it is difficult to formulate a cure rather than a palliative for poor minority performance from numerous symptoms listed by the mainstream. More fundamentally, without interrogations of the social system, the symptoms are also very likely to be used to arbitrarily form more 'vicious circles' for the minority population in the mainstream attempt at explaining the poor minority educational performance, which is in fact leading to the implication that the poverty or 'stupidity' of the minority population is their life style or 'habitus'.

However, it is true that some research has involved analysis of the social system. For example, some academics keenly point out that preferential policies are insufficient in terms of social equality when more factors of the larger society are

taken into consideration, such as economic development, residential registration system, the proportion of the minority language in college entrance examinations, and the fact that metropolis like Beijing and Shanghai set lower entry requirements for candidates from Beijing and Shanghai to enter universities[28] (Ma & Xiao 2002; Teng et al. 1997). Some research, as mentioned earlier, has also criticised the absence of religion and other cultural aspects of minorities in the curriculum, and discrimination against ethnic minorities in the larger society. All of this is believed to have led to ineffective learning outcomes and low motivation levels of minorities. Nevertheless, the extent and depth of this kind of research is limited, partially but significantly because of the fact that this kind of criticism of the social system is at the same time still largely embedded in the discourse of the primitivity of the minority population, or tends to avoid a direct clash with the political mainstream. As a consequence, its voice is too weak to be heard or convincing in discussions of the poor minority performance, in either critics or sympathisers of the minority population.

This is in the end an argument of whether the minority population or the social system is more responsible for the poor minority performance, or of who is more in need of a transformation. If commentators insist that the minority population is staying in the shade of their past primitive stage, and religion is a political threat as well as a backward ideology, the conclusion that will be drawn is that the minority population needs to fundamentally overcome their primitivity or backwardness through education with advanced Han culture and its conveyor, Mandarin, in order to participate in the modernising society. If commentators did not turn their discussions away from the social system, explanations of minorities' lack of enthusiasm for education may be very different. That is to say that it is the social system that has principally prevented minorities from equal access to or participation in education as well as other related formal institutions in the wider society as a result of its policies that have marginalised rather than empowered the

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[28] Indeed, despite the nationally uniform college entrance examinations, entry requirements vary provincially. Of which western regions and Beijing and Shanghai enjoy lower entry requirements that has in fact widened the unequal gap between both. As Beijing and Shanghai have declared to set their own college entrance examinations, the inequality is undoubtedly exacerbated in that it becomes more difficult for candidates from elsewhere to enter nationally most desirable universities located in Beijing or Shanghai as a result of more intakes easily go to candidates from Beijing or Shanghai.

minority population, as can be inferred from limited arguments of some aforementioned commentators. In this sense, the social system is hoped to create more opportunities for the minority population to facilitate their access to or participation in formal institutions in the larger society instead of merely urging minorities to transform their own communities and cultures themselves. In a word, the social system should take more responsibility to create the cultural and social capital for ethnic minorities that will enhance their life chances whilst avoiding simplistically putting the blame on ethnic minorities and/or their marginalised cultural norms and values. Based on chapter two, which examines on the theoretical level the role that the social system plays in determining minority performance, and on chapters four and five that produce an historical and policy backdrop, the following three chapters offer a sustained empirical analysis. Chapters six, seven and eight focus directly on the relationship between educational performance and ethnicity through looking at how community forces towards schooling have been shaped by the cultural and social capital that Muslims and Tibetans have, and which is ingrained in power relations between the social system and ethnic minorities, and between different ethnic communities (in this case, Han, Tibetans and Muslims).

Chapter Six

Between 'Ordinary' and Minority: The Tibetan Case

Introduction

This chapter examines the cultural membership choices and constraints facing Tibetan people. Although educational officials tried to transform Tibetan students into fully-fledged members of the Chinese nation-state, the process of integrating them into the Han mainstream community stigmatised their ethnic and religious identities, forcing them to abandon their Tibetan cultural membership in the pursuit of social, cultural, and economic privileges reserved for the Han majority. This prevents Tibetan students from acquiring the kinds of cultural capital that would enable them to 'progress', and causes many of them to become academic underachievers. Meanwhile, those successful students also pay higher price in schooling. They could otherwise 'do significantly better and enjoy their education much more were the barriers to their success eliminated or reduced' (Gibson 1988:167).

The following sections draw on fieldwork in Tongren County in Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province to examine the predicament that Tibetan parents and students face in school choice. Section One provides a geographical and historical background to ethnicity and education in the field site of Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province. Section Two examines how governments have created opportunities for the social mobility of Tibetans. Section Three explores the positive attitude of Tibetans towards schooling and their hopes for social mobility. Section Four describes educational policy and practice in two different schools: a mainstream or 'ordinary' school (*putong xuexiao*) and a minority school. Section Five considers how parents justify their decisions to send their children to either ordinary or minority schools. Section Six examines students' evaluations of their own schooling type versus the alternative form of schooling. Section Seven discusses the predicament that Tibetan parents and students face in school choice, which is rooted in their

ambivalence towards the value of their culture – an effect of its subordination to the dominant discourse of advanced culture *(xianjin wenhua)*. The conclusion reflects on whether or not inclusive education for Tibetans is possible and whether or not fully inclusive social citizenship – social and economic rights, and equal opportunities – can be achieved whilst at the same time preserving Tibetan cultural integrity. Together these empirical sections flesh out tensions between the desire of Tibetans for personal advancement in an era of economic change, counterbalanced against their competing desires to sustain the integrity of their culture and identity.

Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture: an overview

Huangnan Prefecture is located in the southeast of Qinghai Province. It adjoins two Muslim autonomous counties in northeast Qinghai, and is surrounded by the three Tibetan autonomous prefectures in Qinghai and Gansu provinces in the northwest, southeast and southwest. Huangnan consists of four counties; two of these are largely agricultural (Jianzha and Tongren), while the other two are pastoral (Zeku and Henan). In 2002 the minority population accounted for 92.19 percent of the total. The breakdown of the ethnic minority population is as follows: 65.94 percent Tibetan, 13.65 percent Mongolian, 8.01 percent Muslim, 4.55 percent Tu and 0.04 percent others (HZT 2003a, 2003b). The Tibetan people are distributed mainly in Tongren and Zeku counties (39.80 percent and 37.09 percent), and to a lesser extent, Jianzha (22.76 percent).[1] The ethnic population in Tongren, the seat of the prefectural government, is 72.06 percent Tibetan, 5.55 percent Muslim, 10 percent Han and 12.16 percent Tu (HZT 2003b) (see Table 3 on page 274).

According to the 2000 census, the rural populace accounts for 72.16 percent of the population in Tongren County and 78.29 percent of the whole of Huangnan Prefecture. In Tongren County, the Han and Muslims mostly reside in Longwu Township, so they are urban dwellers. By contrast, most of the Tibetans are rural, engaged in agriculture and some animal husbandry.

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[1] The Mongolians are concentrated in the Henan Mongolian Autonomous County (99.34 percent) while the vast majority of Muslim (Hui, Salar and Bonan) reside in Jianzha (70.53 percent) and Tongren (25.08 percent).

Huangnan Prefecture is one of the three worst performers for education in Qinghai province, having an illiteracy rate of 30.30% – the other two prefectures are Guoluo (34.81%) and Yushu (43.77). Together these three prefectures form the *Qingnan Diqu* (South Qinghai Area), the least developed area in Qinghai as measured by economic and educational indicators. At the other end of the educational spectrum, Huangnan has a lower proportion of the college and university graduates (2.39 percent), as well as secondary school and vocational secondary school graduates (6.84 percent) than the provincial level (3.3 percent and 10.43 percent) (see Table 4 on page 274).[2]

Since 1990 there are 13 secondary schools in Huangnan Prefecture, and four of these are located in Longwu Township, the seat of the prefectural and Tongren county governments. Two are ordinary schools; the *Huangnan Zhou Zhongxue* (Huangnan Prefecture Secondary School), the oldest school in the prefecture with a history of more than 40 years, and the *Tongren Xian Zhongxue* (Tongren County Secondary School). The other two are minority schools: the *Huangnan Zhou Minzu Gaozhong* (Huangnan Prefecture Minority Senior Secondary School), established in 1990, and the *Tongren Xian Minzu Zhongxue* (Tongren County Minority Secondary School). Since minority education in Huangnan Prefecture refers primarily to the education of Tibetans or Tibetan speakers (Mongolians or Tu), it is not surprising that Tibetan students comprise the majority of the student body in the two minority schools. Han students traditionally dominate the Huangnan Prefecture Secondary School, the prestigious school of the prefecture. Muslim students make up the largest part of the student body in the Tongren County Secondary School (half of the students). This ethnic composition of the student body in the two schools reflects residential patterns in Longwu Township as well as the government policy of 'going to school in the neighbourhood' (*jiujin ruxue*).

Historically, Longwu Township was called Longwu *Jie Qu* (Longwu Street District). It emerged to meet the daily needs of the monks of Longwu monastery (Longwu *si*) and its dependants. It formally became a market town at the end of

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[2] The figures are from the fifth census (see HZT 2002:93-112).

the 19th century when the reincarnation of Buddha in Longwu monastery permitted the business people from Gansu, Xunhua[3] and the vicinities to engage in trade in the Longwu area. After the Longwu market area came into being, the Tibetans, the locally dominant ethnic group, called it 'jiakeri', which means 'the Han city'. Half of these business people were Muslims and they eventually became the main residents of the Longwu market area. From 1954 onwards, a new town was built up to the west of the Longwu market town. This new settlement became the seat of both the prefectural and county governmental administrative sectors (HZZBW 1999; TXBW 2001; HZT 1999, 2002, 2003a, 2003b).

Longwu Township is therefore divided into two parts, *xianshang* (the county part), previously the Longwu market area, and *zhoushang* (the prefecture part), which is the new town centre. The new town centre is home to both prefectural and county administrative sectors in Longwu and commercial and entertainment blocks. In accordance with the 'go to school in the neighbourhood' policy, the Huangnan Secondary School, which is located in the prefecture part, mainly recruits students from the new prefecture part of the town. Most of these students are the children of government officials, public servants, teachers, factory workers and so on, and/or from Han background. By contrast, the Tongren County Secondary School, which is situated in the county part, mainly recruits students from the old county part of the town. The students include a large number of Muslim children as well as those from some other ethnic backgrounds whose families are usually engaged in business.

The two minority schools predominantly recruit Tibetan students, most of whom are from the agricultural or pastoral areas in the prefecture, and most come from Tongren County. In the mid 1990s, a donation from Shao Yifu, a businessman from Hong Kong, enabled another minority junior secondary school to be set up next to the Huangnan Secondary School, named the *Yifu Minzu Zhongxue* (Yifu Minority (Junior) Secondary School) and recruiting Tibetan or Tibetan-speaking students. In September 2002, the Tongren County Secondary School merged with

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[3] Xunhua is the only Salar Autonomous County in Qinghai as well as in China.

the Huangnan Prefecture Secondary School because of the decline in student numbers owing to demographic transition.[4] Longwu Township therefore still retains four secondary schools but the composition of the secondary education with particular regard to ethnic background of student is not the same as 12 years ago.

Opportunities for social mobility

State policy gives Tibetan graduates in Huangnan Prefecture priority access to top leadership positions in government.[5] The Tibetans are specifically selected, cultivated and employed as cadres[6] at all levels of administration and in all kinds of scientific and technological positions within the autonomous governmental apparatus (*zizhi zhengfu jiguan*). They are similarly favoured by the recruitment practices of state work units, and also receive preferential treatment for enrolment in local schools, minority colleges or universities (*minzu yuanxiao*), within the province as well as nationwide.[7]

Tibetan culture is also enthusiastically publicised and advocated by state officials. As an example, state documents stipulate that the government at all levels should

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[4] The detail of this demographic transition, which was mainly caused by the move of the Muslim population from the county part to the prefecture part, can be found in chapter seven.

[5] This does not necessarily mean that they are also appointed as the top leaders of the Party committees, which are the factual top positions in the government system.

[6] The people working in state work units are traditionally called *ganbu* (cadre), who are in opposition with *laobaixing* or *qunzhong* (ordinary people, the masses), the rural people (e.g. numerous Tibetans, Mongolians and Tu) and self-employed urban dwellers (mainly Muslims). This is to say that *ganbu* have *tiefanwan* (iron rice bowl, i.e. a secure job), which entitles them to full state welfare services ranging from an urban residence permit (*chengzhen hukou*) to health care and education. In this sense, *ganbu* can also be used to refer to working class people in state work units, despite the fact that their socio-economic status is far lower than those non-working class *ganbu*. Recently there is a tendency that in many ways the line between *ganbu* and *laobaixing* is coming to be blurred under privatisation and marketisation, but the titles are still popular for the reasons of tradition and the fact that privatisation and marketisation have also resulted in a great number of used-to-be 'cadres', particularly working-class 'cadres', losing their job (also see chapter five). As a fact, it becomes more difficult to get a job in the state system owing to the significant decline in the numbers of the state work units while working in the state system still means secure, though various in quantity, welfare benefit. This is particularly desirable in remote areas like Huangnan due to a sluggish economy that precludes private enterprises from being prosperous on a massive scale. In a word, the disparity between cadres and the masses in China is still conspicuous, though in some different ways (also see chapter five). Therefore 'cadre' in this chapter will be referred to people working in the state system regardless of their socio-economic status.

[7] Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Minzu Quyu Zizhi Fa (Self-Autonomous Law of Ethnic Minority Regions in People's Republic of China) (see Wang and Chen 2001:285-314); Huangnan Zangzu Zizhizhou Zizhi Tiaoli (Self-Autonomous Rules in Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture) (see HZZBW 1999:1605-1615).

guarantee freedom of religion for the citizens of all ethnic groups. Tibetan, Mongolian and/or Chinese languages are used either simultaneously or separately in governmental documents.[8]

As early as 1955, just two years after Huangnan Prefecture was established, Tibetans became the majority ethnic group among cadres in Huangnan Autonomous Prefecture (HZZBW 1999). Although when compared to their proportion in the total population in the prefecture, the Han have a higher proportional representation, Tibetans nevertheless form the dominant group in terms of absolute numbers of cadres. The proportion of Tibetan cadres is especially high when compared to the proportion of cadres from other ethnic minority groups (see table 5 on page 274).

In addition to the privileging of Tibetan people within the government, the local government also established a number of Tibetan-oriented key prefectural organizations and institutions for ethnic minority studies covering subjects such as Tibetology (*Zangxue*), ethnic folk art, and ethnic medicine (ibid.). The Longwu Township area therefore is host to establishments such as the Regong Art Gallery (*Regong Yishu Guan*),[9] the Prefectural Ethnic Song and Dance Ensemble (*Zhou Minzu Gewu Tuan*), and the Prefectural Tibetan Medical Hospital (*Zhou Zang Yiyuan*). Longwu Township is also home to four (Tibetan) minority schools and a (Tibetan) minority teachers college. In fact, Tongren was recently honoured as a Nationally Renowned Historic and Cultural City (Town) (*Quanguo Lishi Wenhua Mingcheng*) for its Tibetan culture, the only town of its kind in the province.

All these positive policies and measures towards Tibetan people and culture, coupled with a resurgence and popularisation of Tibetan Buddhism among both Tibetans and Han,[10] has fostered pride in Tibetan ethnic culture and a celebration of Tibetan ethnic identity among Tibetans. For example, among my informants,

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[8] ibid.

[9] Regong is the Tibetan name for Tongren, renowned for its Tibetan painting, sculpture and the similar art works. Regong Art Gallery is a collection place of these art works.

[10] About this resurgence among the Tibetans in general, see Goldstein (1998) and Mackerras (1999).

some Tibetan elites are particularly keen to adopt the phrase *bodajingshen* (extensive knowledge and profound scholarship) to describe their culture.

Education as the means to upward mobility

This largely top-down creation of opportunities for occupational mobility has given Tibetans, both rural and urban, a strong incentive for better social status and quality of life. This section considers the different ways in which these opportunities have created incentives for parents from rural and urban backgrounds to value education for their children.

Rural Tibetans observe the life opportunities enjoyed by their compatriots in state work units, and become aware that their lives could improve if they too could become cadres. They see education as the most direct route to upward mobility. This perception is not confined to the younger generations. Members of the older generations also prioritise education for their children, partly because they missed out on these opportunities for themselves. As some of my interviewees said, they will definitely secure the opportunity for their children to study in schools even if they have to ask for loans or postpone new house building plans.

Individuals from rural backgrounds who have managed to escape farm and pastoral life through employment in a state work unit have a particularly strong sense of the importance of education. Some of these people were recruited into state work units because of their talents in aspects of Tibetan culture, for example *Zang xi* (Tibetan drama), while others received work unit employment as compensation after land was requisitioned from their village. These people have personally experienced the contrast between the hard and bitter life of labouring in the countryside and the easy, relaxed and regularly paid life of being a state work unit person Daily experiences in their new urban working lives further reveal to them the importance of the Chinese language education. One informant told me: 'this is what I can never forget – I cannot even write a *qingjia tiao* (a note asking for leave) (in Chinese). If I could have gone to school in those days, I would have probably been a county magistrate (*xianzhang*)' (Interview 030103).

Like their counterparts with rural origins, urban Tibetans also value education, though for different reasons.[11] Unlike people from rural families, urbanites do not have rural land for their children to fall back on if they fail in college entrance examinations (*gaokao*). The only outlet for them is to find temporary jobs such as being a waiter or shop assistant in the township area.[12] These jobs cannot guarantee a financially stable life, particularly given the low levels of economic development in the area. The enthusiasm for and investment in education by these families therefore becomes one of their most important life goals. This can be seen in their undiminished enthusiasm for education even after the government abolished the job allocation system for university and college graduates in 1996.[13] Under the new policy, when students graduate, they are not guaranteed a job by the state but need to find one by themselves. They are therefore more at risk of unemployment after graduation (*biye ji shiye*) compared to their Han counterparts due to the lower competitiveness in the labour market as will be argued later. But this does not stop them from investing more energy and money in education, and many parents encourage if not force their children to study harder in order to enter secondary schools and ultimately a university.[14] Some parents have gone further by encouraging their children to try their best to enter a key or famous university (*zhongdian daxue, mingpai daxue*), whose graduates usually can find a good job relatively easily.

Among all Tibetans, but especially more informed ones, there is also a growing tendency towards pursuing education abroad, a development that mirrors nationwide trends. This is not surprising given that some Tibetans feel a closer affinity with foreign countries than with China on account of the politicisation and internationalisation of the 'Tibetan question' (*Xizang wenti*). Some of my

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[11] Actually most urban Tibetans usually have an extended family based in rural areas, where they are originally from.

[12] Because the local cadre team is approaching saturation point, it is getting more and more difficult to become a cadre, particularly a non-working class one, without a degree, although there has been the policy that privileges Tibetans in recruitment into state work units.

[13] This is a system in which the government institutionally rather than individually contracts with university/college/school students to assign them to a job in a state work unit when they graduate.

[14] Traditionally for financial and some other practical reasons, they tended to let their children have a job earlier, for instance when children finished their junior secondary school study, their parents preferred to send them to *zhongzhuan* (secondary vocational school), where they could learn some practical skills (*shiyong jishu*). There were basically two benefits they could get by doing so: the period of time they needed to sponsor their children became shorter, and their children could start to earn money earlier, i.e. supplement family income earlier.

interviewees told me that they had some relatives working abroad, and that they expected their overseas kin and relatives to sponsor their education, and perhaps even help them to go abroad if they can demonstrate good school performance. These kinds of expectations were usually fostered by their knowledge of others who have enjoyed such support.

To sum up, rural people have identified education as the main way of freeing themselves from poverty and hardship, while urban dwellers see it as the main means for moving up the social ladder, and eventually joining the elite group wherever this is possible. Tibetan people's evaluations of education are therefore positively equated with material well-being and upward social mobility.

Two schools: an 'ordinary' school and a 'minority' school

Tibetan students in this region can choose to be educated in either an ordinary or minority school, as many minorities in other minority areas in China can do. Among four secondary schools in the township, the Huangnan Secondary School and Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School are under the administration of the Education Bureau of the Prefecture; the other two schools, the Tongren County Minority Secondary School and Yifu Minority Junior Secondary School fall under the jurisdiction of the Education Bureau of Tongren County. In this section, I compare the two prefectural schools – the Huangnan Secondary School and Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School.

The Huangnan Secondary School is a prestigious local school. Since it merged with the Tongren County Secondary School in 2002, it has become the sole ordinary school in the Longwu area. Consequently it has experienced a noticeable increase in the number of the minority students in general, and the Muslim students in particular. According to figures provided by the school official, in the academic year 2002-2003, there were over 800 junior and senior school students in six grades, of whom nearly half were female. Among these, the minority students made up 65.21 percent. The ethnic breakdown of the minority students is Muslim 31.63 percent[15] and Tibetan 24.09 percent.[16] With a slightly lower

[15] The Muslim students are made up of the Hui, Salar, Bonan or their mixture.

[16] The number of Tibetan students offered by the school official is quite different from my investigation. My estimation, which is based on over 90 questionnaires and 50 interviews as well as observation, informal conversations with the people in this school, is that the number of the Tibetan students in terms of naming, language, heredity and psychology is around 10 percent. This will also be the figure used in the following analysis. The higher proportion provided by the school official is mainly a result of the change of nationality or ethnicity (*minzu chengfen*) among some Han and Tu, including those mixed ethnic children of Han, Tibetan or Tu who used to opt for Han for an 'advanced' status. For these Han, they will benefit from the preferential policies for ethnic minorities after changing for minorities; the Tu who changed their nationality are either not satisfied with the categorisation of them by the state or because compared to the Tibetan, they are less visible or heard culturally or politically.

(However, this footnote appeared even insufficient for some Chinese scholars to capture my points correctly. I therefore feel it is necessary to include an email correspondence between a postdoctoral fellow (H) from the UC Berkeley and me (Y) about this issue (12 November 2004).

H: The school roster shows that there are much higher proportions of students/teachers registered as 'Tibetan'. But you disregard this registration and said only a much smaller proportion are 'real' Tibetans. I have problem with it. The fact that some Tibetans do not look Tibetan, do not speak Tibetan, and do not have cultural upbringing as Tibetan, shows that the ethnic categories are multi-facet, more complicated than people assume. This fact is especially important in a co-habitating region like the one you studied. This fact is also very telling in an era of massive socio-economic changes. In any case, you can say that some Tibetans are not 'traditional' Tibetans as people assumed, but you cannot say they are not Tibetan therefore you take them out of your survey of Tibetans. (The way you put it leaves the impression that the school is lying about the ethnic composition. I don't believe it is the case.)

Y: As for the ethnic composition in the school, I take your point regarding the possible influence of socio-economic change on ethnic redefinition or re-identification by the government or individuals. In the case of my school, actually in the region I studied, the people who changed their ethnicity to Tibetan from either Han or Tu (rarely from Muslim or Mongolian) are those who either want to benefit from preferential policies for the minority population (in the Han case) or to be more visible politically or culturally (in the Tu case which I think I explained in a footnote). In the Han case, some changed their ethnicity to Tibetan only in the official record that will, most probably, benefit their children in school or college enrolment – this is the key thing that concerns these parents with regard to their children's future; some other children may have some step-(grand)parent who claimed their Tibetan background, and so families are more likely to register their (grand)children as Tibetan.

This is actually a nationwide phenomenon that occurred since the mid-1980s when preferential policies are quite sophisticatedly and confidently put in place, so in the 1990 census the population of some minority groups increased so dramatically such as the Tujia in Hunan that alarmed the government to introduce a stricter policy of ethnic identification or recognition. I would not say that the Tujia case is the same as the Tibetan case in my research. The former is more complicated in the sense that they were really very much sinicised at a very early stage and so make it less convincing when they were identified as an ethnic minority group while the Kejia (Hakka) people or the Huidong people in the southeast were not.

If we go a bit further into the issue, we will see that the Zhuang group did not have an ethnic consciousness before the state embarked on its Ethnic Identification Project from early 1950s, which is evidence of (to some extent) the arbitrariness of this project. Another widely known case is Manchu, who are historically a minority population but were also historically sinicised and, more importantly, made up a significant part of the present Beijingese, among whom some are identified as Manchu some others are Han.

Meanwhile, all those Tibetans, no matter whether or not they are able to speak the language, whether they look Tibetan physically (?), whether they would not mind letting people know of their Tibetan background, in my research they are all counted as Tibetan. Even so, they are still a very small proportion among the school people. In a word, I removed the type of Tibetans who

percentage than the Han (34.79 percent), the Muslim students comprise the second largest group in the school. In other words, the only ordinary school in Longwu Township is significantly 'minoritised'. All the Tibetan students are from urban areas and are residents of Longwu Township; many have parents working in state work units at the county or prefectural level, while a few have a parent working as a self-employed business person. The students usually pay 400 or 500 *yuan* (Chinese currency unit *renminbi*) per semester, for tuition, facilities (e.g. computers), textbooks and exercise books, and some miscellaneous fees.

Of the 76 teachers at the Huangnan Secondary School, 9.21 percent are Muslims and 25 percent Tibetans, while the remainder are Han.[17] There are currently no teachers of music and fine art, and there is a shortage of teachers of physical education and English. Qualifications-wise, 100 percent of the teachers for the junior grades meet the requirement for an associate college degree (*dazhuan xueli*) or higher, while 46 percent of those who teach senior classes have a university graduate degree (*benke xueli*) or higher.

Like other secondary schools in China, the Huangnan Secondary School very much 'dances to the baton of college entrance examinations' (*genzhe gaokao zhihuibang zhuan*). This is clear in both discipline and course arrangement. The students in year three at the junior level (*chusan*) and above are required to spend in excess of nine hours per day in school during weekdays, and nearly eight hours

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only recently changed their ethnicity in the official record, and apart from the official record they are by no means recognised as Tibetan, either by others (including government officials, Tibetans and other ethnic peoples), or by themselves. The good thing with a Tibetan identity *de jure* and a Han cultural background *de facto* is that they can benefit from preferential policies on the one hand, and on the other, enjoy the benefit of higher cultural or symbolic status in society that is brought by their Han ethnic origin.

Another reason why I am quite confident with my doubt of the school figures is because I know many of them by myself or through my parents since I was a young child. Many of them are actually migrated from other Han-dominated provinces from the 1950s onwards for varied reasons. I knew at that time that they were as the same as my family in terms of their origin of ethnic background and region. The difference is that their families continued staying on there when my family moved back to Chengdu, and then I found they 'became' Tibetan when I visited them again many years later. The funny thing is that nobody, including themselves, see them as Tibetan in every sense – they just registered as Tibetan with the government, and even the government officials know that they are Han. This is also why some people believe that preferential policies have more negative impact on policy implementation and social justice when looking at this type of story, and so advocate abolishing preferential policies.)

[17] These are again different from my investigation: the proportion of the Han, Muslim and Tibetan teachers is respectively 75 percent, 9.21 percent and 2.63 percent.

devoted to classroom study. In addition, they also need to go to school for five hours on Saturdays. And when key examinations such as national college entrance examinations are pending, they even go to school on Sundays.

The school has rules and regulations that reward students for high achievement and punish them for truancy or other disruptive behaviour. Once a student has been punished officially (*chufen*), he or she will not be able to get credentials issued by the school if the punishment has not been discharged by the time of graduation. On the whole, both the school and the teachers are satisfied with the attendance rate of the students, and few students drop out.

Teachers at the Huangnan Secondary School are subject to strict punitive regulations for teaching performance. For instance, if a teacher does not meet the required number of teaching hours, he or she will have to pay a fine. This is despite the fact that the failure is usually caused by the school official not allocating the requisite number of teaching hours to the teacher. One of the regulations that the teachers complained about most bitterly was that they are fined when the percentage of students who have passed the end-of-year examinations falls short of the number designated by the school official. Almost every teacher has been punished for this 'transgression', and the amount they have to pay varies depending on the percentage of failing students. Fines generally range from 40 *yuan* to some 6,000 *yuan* (for reference, the teachers' monthly salary is usually between 700 and 2,500 *yuan*). The key point of criticism towards this policy is not that the school has introduced such a regulation, but rather, that the criteria are not justifiable: the school has not set the percentage according to local conditions and abilities but according to standards in Xining, the capital city of Qinghai Province, where the quality of education is said to be the highest in the province.[18]

[18] In a letter from a schoolteacher in January 2005, I was told that in the first semester of 2004-2005, under a new prefectural policy, more than 10 teachers in the school requested for retirement, of which 10 were approved. The ages of the ten teachers range from 38 to early fifties. Given the high proportion (13.16 percent) and the young ages of the retired teachers, it was said that this is largely a resistance to the strict and ridiculous punitive regulations of the school.

Like schools in other parts of China, the students are divided into two different classes when they enter *gao'er* (year two at the senior level): *wenke ban* (class for liberal arts) and *like ban* (class for science). This eventually leads to their study of specific subjects in universities. The school complies with the national curricula, and so uses uniformly compiled textbooks (*quanguo tongbian jiaocai*). Because of a shortage of teaching staff, music and fine art are not offered; once-offered courses in manual dexterity (*laodong jishu*) and demography (*renkou*) have also been cancelled. Additionally, there are some textbooks on local history and geography that are distributed to the students mainly for self-study, such as *Qinghai Lishi* (Qinghai History), *Qinghai Dili* (Qinghai Geography) and *Minzu Zhengce Changshi* (General Knowledge of the Policy of Ethnic Minorities). The medium of instruction is exclusively Chinese Mandarin (*putonghua*, lit. common language).

The Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School has a much shorter history than the Huangnan Secondary School, but it has a high profile nevertheless. It attracted nearly 500 senior school students in its three grades in 2002-2003. The student body comprises Tibetans (60 percent), Mongolians and Tu, and equal numbers of males and females. All the students are Tibetan speakers. They studied in minority primary schools and junior secondary schools before attending the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School. Most of the students come from agricultural or pastoral areas, and board in the school. The frequency of home visits greatly varies according to the distance between home and school – once a week at one end of the spectrum, once a semester at the other, though most return once every one to two months. The students pay 200-300 *yuan* per semester for their study and boarding, and have a grant-in-aid (*zhuxuejin*) of 40 *yuan* from the government per semester.

The hours that the students are expected to spend in school exceed eight a day, with more than seven hours of classroom study. There are no classes on either Saturdays or Sundays. The students must also go out for physical exercise (*chucao*) at 7am, five days a week.

The school has rules and regulations that rewards and punishes the students, but compared with the Huangnan Secondary School, discipline is quite lax. Unlike the Huangnan Secondary School, there is no school uniform for the flag-raising ceremony or any other special occasions. But like the ordinary school, the attendance rate of the students satisfies both the school and the teachers, and there are rarely any dropouts.

There are 35 full-time teachers at the school and half of them are Tibetan, nearly half are Han, and a few are from other ethnic backgrounds. The teachers are well qualified with 85.70 percent of them having an undergraduate degree. Even so, there is a strong need for physics and chemistry teachers. Unlike the Huangnan Secondary School, there is no serious punishment system directed at the teachers' work.

Apart from the courses that are commonly offered in both the ordinary and minority schools, the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School offers a course that has been tailored in accordance with government policy, i.e. *Zang yuwen* (Tibetan language and literature). This is the only course delivered in the Tibetan language at the minority school; all the others are taught in Chinese. *Han yuwen* (Chinese language and literature) and *Zang yuwen* are the only two courses that use *Wushengqu Tongbian Jiaocai* (uniformly compiled textbooks by five provinces and regions in West China where there are Tibetan residents, namely TAR, Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan and Gansu provinces). Fine art is also a Tibetan-related course, in which the students can learn Tibetan Buddhist painting (*Tangka*), and for which Tongren is renowned both within and without the Tibetan area.

As in the Huangnan Secondary School, the students in the minority school are divided into the arts and sciences streams from year two (at the senior level) onwards. They are entitled to sit college entrance exams in Tibetan.[19] The majority of the students will enter local or regional minority colleges or universities, and be mainly majoring in Tibetan literature or science. In the past

[19] This is the policy called *minkaomin*, an idea that allows minority students to sit college entrance examinations in minority languages. Also see Sautman (1999) and chapter five.

few years, the number of the students choosing science subjects has increased and is now slightly higher than those choosing Tibetan literature, the most popular subject in the past. This is possibly in part influenced by the abolition of the job allocation system. In the past, university graduates were guaranteed jobs regardless of whether or not there was a social or economic demand for their subject. Since students must now find their own jobs, subjects need to be chosen with more careful attention to the job market. So even though all the science subjects are among the most difficult ones for the students in the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School (also see below),[20] they still tend to devote themselves to these subjects. There are nevertheless a high proportion of students who choose Tibetan – this choice usually enables them to enrol in a minority university or college more easily.

The parental dilemma: where to send children?

Justification for opting for minority schools

There are differences among Tibetan parents with regard to school choice. Generally speaking, rural parents, farmers or village government officers, and working class parents in state sectors, send their children to (Tibetan) minority (primary) schools in their villages of origin. The parents chose this type of school because the fees are lower, travel to and from school is convenient, the medium of instruction is Tibetan and the students and teachers are Tibetan. The students with this kind of early schooling usually continue their education in minority junior secondary and then senior secondary schools, which tend to be located in urban areas.

Parents preferred to keep their children within a Tibetan minority school environment because they feared that their children will not perform as well as their Han peers if they attended an ordinary school. Conversely, they thought that it will be easier for their children to study in their mother tongue and in a Tibetan cultural environment: language and thought are inseparable and so Tibetan students often experience difficulty in grasping concepts and communicating within a Han language and cultural environment. For example, in ordinary

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[20] According to some teachers in this school, most students in the past got less than 20 percent of the exam questions correct in college entrance examinations.

schools, Tibetan students can hardly understand common sense aspects of the school routine that are taken for granted by the Han. As a consequence, even a brilliant Tibetan child who is able to perform excellently in a minority school remains, at best, an average student in an ordinary school.[21]

Parents who decided to send their children to minority schools were aware that many people in the larger society see the Tibetan language as useless. But these parents felt that the language will nevertheless be useful so long as the student has a good command of it. This means that when their children come back to Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture as university graduates, they can still work in the government, for instance, in a law court or village governmental sectors, where cadres need to know the Tibetan language to deal with rural Tibetan people. The view that Tibetan is useful also stems from a belief that their children will normally return to Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture after graduation. This is because they thought that Tibetan children lack the knowledge, social contacts and cultural proficiency (in Han) to be able to compete with Han people in finding employment outside the Tibetan areas.

Parents also preferred minority schools because they believed that their children – and themselves as well – should be able to speak Tibetan before studying other languages, cultures or subjects. To justify their choice, they also addressed the negative effect of studying in ordinary schools. They said that their children will be affected by the Han way after studying in Chinese in an ordinary school, and will adopt a Han way of thinking. As a result, the children will become disobedient or not behave themselves, demand too many material comforts or become fastidious but not industrious, just like all those children who are born and grow up in a better-off family.

Many parents told me that nowadays a Tibetan child could learn everything in minority schools that they can in ordinary schools. They pointed out that due to the adoption of the national curriculum in all state schools, their children could learn 'advanced' knowledge like Chinese, English, and computing even in a

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[21] Correspondingly, they also pointed out that a Han student would not be able to perform as well as Tibetan students if she or he were studying in a minority school.

minority school. The extra advantage they can obtain in minority schools is that students can also learn some Tibetan subjects like painting, literature and language, and some dance and song in regular or extra-curricula. This is what the children in ordinary schools can hardly get, or even worse, they will finally be unable to specialise in Tibetan language and culture like their Tibetan counterparts in minority schools, and they will not be as proficient in Chinese knowledge as their Han fellow students in ordinary schools. For this reason, Tibetan parents believed that a minority school education will provide their children with all necessary knowledge for today's world, and will also allow the children to acquire their own ethnic culture, in an environment of their own ethnic people, and in the Tibetan way.

Justification for opting for ordinary schools

The parents who sent their children to an ordinary school usually worked in state work units at either the county or prefectural level (but usually not as manual workers), and had educational experience in Chinese in ordinary schools, or an educational experience in minority schools followed by recruitment into a state work unit where the working language is Chinese. Their primary concern in school choice is the limited opportunity to use the Tibetan language, 'even in this Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture', in the government sectors at the prefectural, county or even village level. In a word, Chinese is the working language in state work units, even in Tibetan-related institutions such as the Prefectural Ethnic Song and Dance Ensemble, the Regong Art Gallery, and minority schools.[22] Some examples they gave were that all documents from the authorities need to be drafted in Chinese, although they are also usually coupled with a version translated into Tibetan, and the formal language in meetings and conferences is Chinese, even when the majority of the participants are Tibetan.[23] The conclusion

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[22] To adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction in secondary minority schools does not seem to be compulsory though this is encouraged by the local government policy, particularly in senior secondary schools. For instance, my investigation shows that the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School is the only one of its kind in the township where Chinese is thoroughly used as the medium of instruction, while the other two minority schools only partially do so. This is interesting concerning the cultural background of the head-teachers in three schools: the head-teachers in the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School are Han and those in other two minority schools are Tibetan.

[23] I was told that the only opportunity when Tibetan is employed as the main means of communication is during the period of the Two Conferences (*Lianghui Qijian*), i.e. of the

is thus that one must learn Chinese regardless of whether one stays in Huangnan or moves elsewhere. In their understanding, the dominant status of the Chinese language is determined by its status as the official language of the country, and by the fact that it is the first language of the vast Han majority. With regard to schooling, a competence in Chinese will enable a Tibetan student to study in Chinese at a regular rather than a minority college or university, and this will definitely become an advantage when looking for a job in competition with the Tibetan graduates from minority colleges or universities (also see below).

In short, a good command of Tibetan without Chinese will cause inconvenience in daily life, and will become a job ceiling in personal advancement. Importantly though, no one who held this view explicitly endorsed the idea of giving up Tibetan. They still expressed willingness or claimed to require that their children master oral Tibetan, and to a lesser extent, written Tibetan. Another consideration in discouraging children from learning or using Tibetan is that, as Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is a multiethnic area (*minzu zaju qu*), it would be inappropriate to adopt Tibetan as a major means of communication. Moreover, many parents also argued or implied that the quality of education in ordinary schools is higher than that in minority schools.

Some other reasons that inform the choice of parents who sent their children to ordinary schools are beyond an instrumental concern with language or quality of education, but are more ideological. One opinion is that Tibetan culture is closely connected with Buddhism, particularly when it goes up to certain levels. As a religion, Buddhism is a good choice in cultivating one's moral character and nourishing one's nature (*xiushen yangxing*). But this is not very useful for the progress and development of society, and could even come to play a hindering role in this respect. This is a popular view among some middle-aged Tibetans who were educated during the Cultural Revolution when all kinds of religion were criticised as feudal superstition (*fengjian mixin*), and as backward and opposed to advanced materialism (*weiwu zhuyi*). Another disadvantage in studying Tibetan culture, as some parents perceived, is that such a study would cultivate an

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Prefectural People's Congress Conference and the Prefectural Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference.

antagonistic sentiment among Tibetans towards the government and the CCP, and further, foster a consciousness of secession.

Where do students want to study?

Evaluations of the students in the Huangnan Secondary School

In the Huangnan Secondary School, more than 90 percent of the Tibetan students (10 in 11) in my investigation expressed a preference for studying in the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School. On the whole the students saw life in the Huangnan Secondary School as unattractive and boring. This is because major courses (*zhuke*) are usually too demanding because of college entrance examinations; they would have preferred to study minor courses (*fuke*) and extra-curricula activities, such as music, painting and sports. In addition, they would have welcomed the opportunity to study courses such as Tibetan language and literature. But these options were either not offered or were reduced to a bare minimum by the school. For example, even though there was ethnic minority content in the textbooks, many teachers did not bother to cover this material in class, and instead instructed the students to read it by themselves. The content of some teaching materials on ethnic minority issues was often perceived by the Tibetan students to be antagonistic, and this sense of antagonism was exacerbated by the negative ways in which some teachers spoke about Tibetan customs. In fact, the content is basically presented in line with the notion of social evolution as illustrated in chapter five.

In contrast, they said that the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School students could not only study all subjects that were offered in the Huangnan Secondary School, including Chinese, English and computing, but they also had the opportunity to learn the minor courses mentioned above. In discussing why it was not possible for them to study the kinds of ethnic culture courses offered in the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School, the students of the ordinary school explained that their school could not offer such courses because they were not part of the core content of college entrance examinations. Moreover, educational planners assumed that the Tibetan students obtain culturally relevant knowledge from their families anyway. When asked why they were keen to study their own language and culture, more than 90 percent of them described their

embarrassment about their insufficient Tibetan, and explicitly expressed their need to improve their Tibetan. They thought that one should master his or her mother tongue, 'the Tibetan language is a symbol of (our) ethnic group' (Interview 010204), it would be a disgrace otherwise; it would be unacceptable if their offspring were not able to speak Tibetan in the future; it was inconvenient for them when communicating with their Tibetan fellows, with whom they spent more time than with those from the other ethnic groups. As for their interest in and enthusiasm for studying their own culture and religion, they explained that it is always a good thing to acquire more knowledge; (their) religion advises people to be virtuous; they would have enough motivation to study excellently if the school offered courses in their culture and religion, and this would in turn enhance their confidence in learning other subjects in the school.

In addition to curriculum issues, the overly stern discipline system of the school and the cultural chauvinism of the teachers exacerbated their boredom with school life. Generally the school and teachers kept requiring the students to study hard in order to be able to enter a (good) university. Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, in order to keep up academic competitiveness, the school official also set up strict punitive regulations for teachers. The teachers therefore faced punishment if exam targets were not met, so they transferred this pressure onto the students through harsh discipline, e.g. giving an official punishment, or beating or scolding the students (regardless of ethnic background of the students) at will. In contrast, the students perceived that in the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School, the students were not disciplined so harshly. They believed that the teachers in the minority school respected and understood the students, treating them as their own children, because 'they are also Tibetan' (Interview 010205).

When it came to the practice of ethno-religious customs in the Huangnan Secondary School, the students told me that the practitioners of religion were teased by the fellow students and even by the fellow Tibetan students. They explained that some teachers did not even allow them to share or explain their customs: they told the Tibetan students not to bring '(minority) ethnic things' (*minzu de dongxi*) into the school, because they might be eccentric (*xiqiguguai*) and unhealthy (*buliang*). Some more informed students pointed out that this is

because that the school culture was based on Han culture. The students of the Huangnan Secondary School also had the impression that the Minority Secondary School does not discipline its students too strictly because they are able to wear their ethnic clothes and other ethnic- or religion-related accessories like Buddhist prayer beads.

A final reason that the Tibetan students at the Huangnan Secondary School thought that they would have preferred to attend the Minority Secondary School is because their classmates would be fellow Tibetans who they felt to be more straightforward, authentic, broad-minded and cheerful. By contrast, they perceived their fellow Han students in the Huangnan Secondary School to be tricky, hypocritical or insular. Moreover, some of their fellow Han students were not interested in making contact with the minority students. This tendency was presumably embedded in the Han self-perception of their higher intellectual quality; this led the Han students to believe that they could have a higher academic achievement in the school, and consequentially a higher socio-economic status in society in the future. Tibetans therefore faced the prejudicial view that they are intellectually poor, and cannot perform as well as the Han students. Although a couple of Tibetan students said that they did not make friends along the lines of ethnicity but personal character, they expressed their preference for the personality that was usually perceived to be possessed by the Tibetan students as portrayed above.

Evaluations of the students in the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School

In the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School, 60 percent of the students (25 in 41) in my investigation said that they would have preferred to study in the Huangnan Secondary School. Language was the first concern: they believed their Chinese would have improved if they had studied in the ordinary secondary school. They also held a positive view towards the teaching quality and educational standards of the Huangnan Secondary School. And they felt that they would have benefited from studying alongside the Han students who they saw as knowledgeable and academically talented. Relatedly, they thought that studying at the Huangnan Secondary School would have the added advantage of enabling them to make friends with Han.

Among the Huangnan Minority Secondary School students who expressed a preference for staying in their own school, language was the main consideration; with poor Mandarin they felt that they would not be able to keep up with their Han classmates if they studied in the ordinary secondary school. This is understandable if we consider that ever since primary school they have received instruction in their Tibetan mother tongue. The perceived academic superiority of the Han students in the Huangnan Secondary School was another factor that precluded some of them from feeling confident enough to choose the Secondary School over the Minority Secondary School. While recognising the social function of the Chinese language, they were not particularly interested in Han culture; even among those who would like to study in the Huangnan Secondary School, only 1 in 41 students expressed an interest in Han culture. By contrast, the minority school students showed high enthusiasm for their own culture, religion and language. This was another key attraction of the Huangnan Minority Secondary School – that they could study their own culture, language, religion and history. Lastly, to study in an environment of Tibetan compatriots made them willing to stay in the Huangnan Minority Secondary School.

To be 'ordinary' or minority: the cultural dilemma

Tibetan students and parents both valued education as a way of producing useful people who could benefit their own ethnic group, their family and themselves. In other words, they were not content with their status quo. Conversely, they strived so much for socio-economic mobility that sometimes this resulted in a desperate pattern of study without break and serious frustration with the ineffectiveness of their study, particularly in the Huangnan Minority Secondary School.[24]

Tibetan internalisation of the dominant critique of Tibetan culture and people

Apart from the instrumental function of upward mobility, education was symbolically important for Tibetans because it was seen as a way to transform the

[24] There are two examples that are worth mentioning. A teacher in a minority school told me that some of his students had to spend 40 minutes just trying to memorise a physics theorem in Chinese (so they are regarded as intellectual inferiority). Secondly, many students I investigated in the minority school eagerly requested in their questionnaires that I instruct them how to study effectively.

traditional image of themselves as a backward people (*luohou minzu*) into an advanced people (*xianjin minzu*). One of the most often used words in interviews was *xianjin* (advanced). They sensitively avoided employing '*luohou*' (backward) to describe their ethnic group by simply emphasising that Tibetans need to absorb or study the advanced culture in order to 'get the traditional culture reformed and nurtured (*buyu*)'. Without this reform and nurture, they feared being 'phased out'. In their mind, the advanced culture was *Zhongyuan wenhua* (Central Plains culture, i.e. Chinese Han culture), and *waiguo wenhua* (foreign culture) (Interview 030106, -07, -09). In this vein, some of them even argued that when sending children to study in school, it was also necessary to teach the children how to distinguish between *zongjiao* (religion) and *mixin* (superstition). Others emphatically explained to me that nowadays many Tibetan practices were not *religious practices*, but *customs* – custom was at the top while superstition was at the bottom in their ideological ranking system, with religion in between.

What is more, some Tibetans who migrated from other sinicised areas or with a sinicised education even acutely criticised Tibetan culture by claiming that the Tibetan modes of thought (*guannian*) were outdated and backward in the Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, because Tibetan tradition was so deeply rooted in this area (Interview 030109 and an informal conversation with a Tibetan teacher in the minority school). What I found most striking was the comments of a Tibetan school administrator, who was also a teacher of Tibetan language and literature and a would-be reincarnation of Buddha as I was told. When discussing the achievement of the Tibetan students in his minority school, he kept repeating (Interview 020201):

> Here it is a place the Tibetan people are concentrated, the modes of thinking (*sixiang guannian*) of the people are backward, and the economy is not developed, the desire for pursuing knowledge (*qiuzhiyu*) is low.

As a school official, he expectedly ethnicised economic and educational achievement by making a cause-effect link between cultural backwardness, economic underdevelopment and lack of motivation for education.[25]

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[25] On how hegemonies of race, civilization and economy are entangled with one another, Ong provides some interesting and insightful observations (Ong 1996).

This kind of view was echoed by the Tibetan students from both the Huangnan Secondary School and the Huangnan Minority Senior Secondary School when they compared Han and Tibetans. They thought that the Han students had more aptitude for analysis and inference (*fenxi tuili nengli*), and were more knowledgeable, open-minded (*siwei kaifang*) and rational (*lizhi*). For instance, unlike Tibetans, a Han student usually tends to make a concession to avoid trouble in a clash (*xishiningren*), while the former tends to fight to the finish. In their eyes, the Han students had a higher study level (*xuexi shuiping*) and cultural level (*wenhua shuiping*), and so were of high quality (*suzhi gao*). The Han teachers in the Huangnan Secondary School were also thought to possess more up-to-date knowledge. These factors allowed for a better study ethos (*xuexi fengqi*) in the Huangnan Secondary School. By contrast, they considered that the Tibetan students usually had lower academic achievement, were more conventional (*chuantong*) or conservative (*baoshou*), and less sociable (*shejiaoshang buxing*). Essentially, Tibetans thought themselves to be of poor quality (*suzhi cha*) and morally degenerate (*daode baihuai*). As evidence of this they cited an inclination to drink or fight, which even scared some of their teachers. It was not surprising that the negative comments on the Tibetan students were said in relation to those students at the Huangnan Minority Secondary School, and by the Tibetan students in the ordinary school.

The comments of the Tibetan parents and students about the advancement of the Han and the poor quality and backwardness of the Tibetans suggested that they had internalised the critique of the dominant culture regarding their people, customs and cultural values. Their resulting ambivalence about their own cultural identity could be seen at even a very young age. When jokingly asked by some adults 'which ethnic group do you belong to', some young children who lived in a state work unit environment were very likely to identify themselves (and the people they had intimate relations with, for example, their mother) with Han, but regarded others (even their father or siblings, for instance) as Tibetan (Interview 030103, -09).

Discrimination against Tibetans

Although few parents or students explicitly stated during the interviews that they (or their children) had experienced discrimination, this did not seem convincing given the exaggerated tone of their denials. In fact, information about discrimination was evident in some of the stories they told. For instance, when a parent explained why he was not interested in attending parent-teacher meetings, he gave the example of a parent-teacher meeting that he had once attended when his daughter was in the primary school:

> I asked the teacher 'how is my kid performing?' 'Your Tibetan kids are all like that' was the reply. There is more to it than meets the ear. At that moment I wondered to myself why he said that, 'Tibetan students are all like that!' Like what? I did not fully understand but did not ask for his further elaboration. However he was the teacher of my kid...I have not attended a parent-teacher meeting since then (Interview 030110).

Another parent told me that when his son was in the primary school, fellow students bullied him because he was a minority (*shaoshu*). The continued bullying slowly but surely reduced his enthusiasm for study and school life. This contributed to his mediocre academic achievement and disruptive behaviour. His parent concluded by saying that if the teachers had intervened with these bullies, his son's situation would not have been so bad (Interview 030104):

> The form master should have cared about and paid more attention to this kind of (minority) kid, rather than seeing them as the same (as the majority) and then leave them there carelessly. He finally sent his second child to a minority school.

Some of the Tibetan students mentioned a word that is usually used by the other ethnic students to describe them: *fan*. This word basically refers to the nature of a type of person who is slow in response (*chidun*), mentally problematic (*naozi you wenti*). Sometimes even some of their teachers would make a connection between a student and rural Tibetan people when criticising his or her stupidity by saying 'you are just as stupid as those pastoral Tibetans (*muqu lai de Zangmin*)' (Interview 010202, -05). Here pastoral Tibetans were located in the lowest position in comparison to urban and farming Tibetans.[26]

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[26] According to Harrell, Crossley also observes a similar view of difference between pastoral and farming populations (Harrell 1995:19).

The dilemma facing the Tibetans emulating the Han model

This devaluation of Tibetan culture and people by the Han schools and society leads to cultural ambivalence and alienation among Tibetans who had been sent to ordinary schools for their education. As some of my interviewees commented, in a cultural sense these Tibetans can hardly harmonise with their ethnic group of origin, particularly with the older generations, nor can they merge with the mainstream Han – though perhaps in the future their own children will (!). Knowledge-wise, they cannot specialise in Tibetan language and culture, or Han. They then come to be 'nothing' (*shenme ye bushi*).[27] There is only pain or tragedy left. They explained this is the very reason why these Tibetans, after becoming parents, tend to send their own children to minority schools, instead of following the example of their own parents and making sacrifices to send their children to 'advanced' Han schools. Some other parents also expressed their regret about their choice to send their children to ordinary schools, which resulted in introducing and widening a cultural and linguistic gap between generations. They therefore wanted to stay in their village of origin after retirement so as to nurture their grandchildren there with Tibetan culture. Some parents also tried to arrange some family tutorials for their ordinary school children in Tibetan culture and language. But most such 'experiments' are ineffective, due to the difficulty of finding time outside their children's school study, which is predominantly focused on college entrance examinations. In addition, Tibetan culture and language lessons can also stir up conflict between parents and their children. A common response on the part of the children is: now you are forcing me to study these, why did not you send me to a minority school in the first place? (Interview 030110)

The dilemma facing the Tibetans opting for minority schools

Compared to the ordinary school, the average academic outcome for the students in the Huangnan Minority Secondary School is limited, since it focused on

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[27] An interesting case as a point of comparison is the language ability of the Tibetan students in inland boarding schools where they study all subjects but Tibetan language in Chinese. This has made their language ability in Tibetan inferior to that of their counterparts who remain in Tibet while their Chinese ability is not necessarily strong though surely better than those remaining in Tibet. For more information see Postiglione, Zhu and Ben (2004).

preparing the students for exams in many 'useful' or 'advanced' subjects like Chinese, English or science, to which the students had little exposure in their previous rural and/or minority environments. At the same time, they were usually required or encouraged to study these subjects in Chinese, an unfamiliar language to them since the medium of instruction in their primary, and to a lesser extent, junior secondary schools was Tibetan. In other words, their background and previous education did not equip them for dealing with Chinese language instruction in unfamiliar subjects. Following the *minkaomin* preferential policy of the state,[28] graduates from minority secondary schools usually enter local, mostly minority colleges or universities. The admission requirements for these institutions are usually lower than for regular universities. As an understandable result, employers normally prefer non-minority university or college graduates.

Ineffective study and a perception of the better quality of education in ordinary schools as mentioned earlier become the immediate dynamics which drove some of the minority students to dream of studying in ordinary schools, while simultaneously pushing others further away from the ordinary school education as shown earlier. This desire to study in ordinary schools was not just driven by a concern with education alone, but also by an eagerness to become more 'sociable' and 'advanced' as argued above. Because most of the students in the Huangnan Minority Secondary School are from rural areas, having few social relations with the outside world, boarding in the school and the negative view of them emanating from local urban dwellers, including their counterparts in the Huangnan Secondary School, make it more difficult for and hence more desirable to them to socialise with off-campus society. All these reasons plus their language difficulty isolated them from both their far-away home community and the host community of their school.[29]

In other words, attending minority schools considerably reduces their competitiveness in the future job market and their opportunity to transform their traditional image as they strive for. Under such circumstances, the Tibetan

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[28] See footnote 19.

[29] This segregation seems to become more serious with the Tibetan students studying in inland boarding schools. Details can be found in Postiglione, Zhu and Ben (2004).

students in the Minority School were becoming increasingly devoted to the 'useful' subjects associated with advancement and socio-economic mobility, which were taught in Chinese. At the same time, the need to master Chinese and the unfamiliar subjects taught in Chinese means that they had to de-prioritise their own ethnic cultural studies. Furthermore, in minority schools the opportunity to study minority cultures was actually very limited – the only tailored course for ethnic minorities was minority language and literature, which was no more than a training in language and writing skills, as I was told by the teachers of Tibetan language and literature. Another difficulty is that opportunities they had for home visits are limited due to impractical distance. All these factors together resulted in a fall in the standard of the Tibetan language among the students. Some Tibetan language teachers feared that this diminishing exposure of the minority school students to Tibetan would lead to their alienation from their community, people and culture, and eventually, undermine their ethno-religious community as a whole.

This picture is quite different from that perceived by the parents who sent their children to minority schools. As they claimed, their children had access to all the necessary knowledge as well as their own culture in minority schools. But the study of necessary 'useful' knowledge nevertheless resulted in ineffectiveness and the ethnic cultural content of the curriculum being reduced to the minimum. The only appeal of the Huangnan Minority Secondary School, apart from practical reasons (lower fees, grant-in-aid, boarding, etc.), was that it was a Tibetan environment because the majority of the school people were Tibetan. The explanation of the 40 percent of the students in this school who said they preferred the idea of staying in their own school and did not want to attend the ordinary school generally centred on the idea that they wanted to feel safe rather than be exposed to a competitive, uncertain and even humiliating environment. In my investigation, the only Tibetan student who had studied in minority schools, and then opted to attend the ordinary school for a better education, transferred back to the Minority School after the first semester. She listed the reasons as follows: I could not get used to the teaching methods they used there, and also wanted to strengthen my Tibetan and learn more about our ethnic culture. I can

better settle down to study (*geng anxin de xuexi*) in an environment of my own ethnic compatriots (Questionnaire 144).

At a superficial level, staying at the Huangnan Minority Secondary School seems to be a voluntary decision on the part of the parents and students. Most Tibetan students at that school, however, felt they had no other choice. Likewise, few students from the Huangnan Secondary School have actually transferred to the Huangnan Minority Secondary School despite the large proportion of them (10 in 11) who expressed their desire to do so as shown earlier. Both consciously and subconsciously the students and the parents were very aware of how much they would lose for their future if they pursued education in the culturally relevant environment, as they perceived it, of a minority school. And at a more subconscious level, they had internalised ideas about the Han superiority and the need to be absorbed into the mainstream in order to progress. For example, they saw themselves as more advanced than their counterparts in minority schools when criticising their minority school counterparts as can be seen above. This idea is evident in the fact that I was told on some informal occasions that there was a much higher proportion of Tibetan children in the most prestigious primary ordinary school, the Third Primary (also see the next chapter), compared to that of one or two decades ago.[30] A parent explained that this was because Tibetans were 'no longer biased against learning the Han Chinese language' (Interview 030109). Another voice I have heard is: this has happened under the pressure of state policy (Questionnaire 153).

Conclusion

In the process of making decisions about schooling, Tibetans in both ordinary and minority schools found themselves in a predicament. While they struggled against the perceived threat of being 'phased out' economically or culturally by working hard in school and emulating the Han model of 'advanced culture' and 'high quality', this seemed to inevitably devalue their own culture and to put them at risk of losing contact with it. This dilemma placed them in a situation where they voluntarily pursued education but then found themselves involuntarily alienated

[30] I used to be a pupil in this primary school more than 20 years ago. I still remember that among my some 100 fellow pupils, there was only one who was Tibetan.

from their own culture, and further, degraded as the owner of their culture.[31] Tibetan parents, students and intellectuals have responded by starting to think about what kind of education they need. Some Tibetans argued that transmitting Tibetan culture and language was not only a private responsibility, but also the obligation of public or formal institutions like schools. For instance, some Tibetans started to appeal for Tibetan to be the medium of instruction at all levels in minority schools. Others advocated combining the advantage of monastery (religious) culture and (Tibetan) rural culture with the school curriculum in order to preserve and develop the local culture as a whole.

But it is unlikely that both the preservation of Tibetan culture and the education of Tibetan people for socio-economic mobility can be achieved. Factors from two sides attribute to this pessimism. First, on the side of schools and society, schools tend to discourage the desire for a Tibetan relevant curriculum in favour of the mainstream national culture. One of the typical remarks on this issue came from one of the top administrators who was also a teacher of history in a mainstream school (Interview 020105):

> [A student] is a secondary school student first, and then a minority student... Minority students should be equal with Han and other students, and cannot surpass the other students. The school treats all students from different ethnic backgrounds the same (*dui ge minzu xuesheng dou yishitongren*)... [When the students are] in the school, they should hold back (*baoliu*) some of their ethnic or religious customs; it will otherwise bring about a negative effect (*buliang yingxiang*) in teaching and among their fellow students. As for the curriculum, we offer courses of ideology and history in order to educate students with the correct view towards ethnicity and religion. For example, in history lessons [we] teach [students] the tradition of upholding unification of the country... We are an ordinary school rather than a minority school, even though we also have minority students. But if we practise distinguishing features (*gao tedian*) for this reason, it will become purposeless that the state runs schools (*shiqu guojia banxue de zongzhi*).

Furthermore, even if a school, particularly a minority school, were willing to equally incorporate Tibetan language, religion and history into the curriculum, it alone cannot hope to achieve desirable results on a massive scale when confronted

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[31] The pair of term 'in/voluntarily' is partially inspired by Ogbu's (1987, 1998) distinction between voluntary and involuntary minorities though the pair of concept is quite misleading itself and is not adopted in my research. For further details, see chapter two.

by a national mainstream ideology that devalues Tibetan culture, because 'the school is run by the state' (Interview 020201).[32]

The other side that contributes to this pessimism is Tibetans themselves, though this is largely subordinated to the symbolic violence of the mainstrcam. When the national agenda is trying to 'fit' Tibetans into the mainstream, it is, at the same time, also cultivating a 'self-loathing' or 'an internalised devaluation' of their culture and group (Young 1990:165). This internalisation is so deeply embedded in the Tibetan mindset that it has resulted in their sharp criticisms of their own group and culture as can be seen above, or their shame regarding their customs, though this may be in a relatively mild tone. A schoolgirl, when seeing that her parents invited some Lamas to treat an unwell family member with some rituals after a medical treatment in a hospital, uncomfortably asked: isn't it enough that we just see a doctor (Interview 030110)? Moreover, a Tibetan teacher, who is very comfortable of his incompetence of Tibetan, claimed that he could not accept the idea that people consider him to be one of the local Tibetans, because the Tibetans in this region 'lag behind other ethnic groups in both cultural quality and personal sociability' (Interview 020203).

In this cultural process of being-made and self-making (Ong 1996), Tibetan culture and groups are pushed to the periphery in opposition to the mainstream centre, which has resulted in their eventual adoption and adaptation to the mainstream culture at the expense of their own culture and group image. In this process, the social system – both as public institutions and the majority Han – plays a critical role that has provoked the Tibetan community forces mainly in the form of the mobilisation of its bonding social capital, and at the same time restrained its political mobility that goes hand in hand with the prevention of their culture from enjoying full freedom and flourishing. As a result, the Tibetan community has been caught in a dilemma with reference to cultural citizenship in general, and cultural capital in particular. Tibetans therefore have still to face the question of where, what and how to study. In other words, they have to choose, or

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[32] Some research has also discussed the significant role in education with regard to ethnic minority cultures that the school itself cannot play alone. See for example Nieto (1999) and Tomlinson (1996).

have no choice about what they need to sacrifice in an attempt to 'catch up' – catch up intellectually, economically or culturally?

Chapter Seven

The Social Disengagement of 'Familiar Strangers': The Muslim Case

Introduction

This chapter is to explore how Muslims have disengaged from formal institutions as a result of the larger society regarding them as 'familiar strangers' (Lipman 1997). This can be understood as a tension between their desire for full social citizenship in the form of rights to employment and education, and the decrease of the limited social and cultural capital they originally had due to their growing marginalisation in society. Therefore, education, the major way to achieve upward social mobility, becomes irrelevant to Muslims to a large extent. As a response, Muslims show little motivation, enthusiasm for and confidence in state education, which has led to their poor school performance. This is grounded in both their pessimistic expectations about their socio-economic status in the future, and the prejudice and hostility they have received from individuals as well as institutions. In other words, Muslims are hardly identified by the larger society as Chinese (Han) people unless they sinicise themselves, involuntarily or voluntarily, like many of their compatriots in China proper, by substantially hiding or removing their ethno-religious markers.

Section One depicts the state education available to Muslims in the region. It discusses how this availability has experienced a significant transformation as the demographic composition, residential pattern and occupational traditions of Muslims have changed fundamentally as a consequence of the expansion of Longwu Township. Section Two will reveal the Muslim educational achievement by examining one Muslim community in comparison with three Tibetan villages, and the parents of the Muslim students in comparison with those from other ethnic backgrounds. It will then discuss the school performance of Muslim students by mainly looking at their academic achievement at the stage of both compulsory and post-compulsory education. Section Three investigates how

Muslim parents perceived their social and economic status in the larger society and how they evaluated the school curriculum from their ethnic point of view. Section Four reveals Muslim students' resistance to, or disengagement from, the mainstream school culture, along with their detachment from their own ethno-religious culture and group though to a lesser extent. On the basis of the previous sections, Section Five argues that Muslims, as 'familiar strangers' to China, are in a disadvantaged position in terms of the social and cultural capital. This position has shaped a reluctant attitude among both Muslim parents and children towards school education, which in turn significantly reduces their competitiveness in a changing world directed at a knowledge economy and their desire and capability to participate in social and political life.

State education for Muslims in the region[1]

As depicted in the previous chapter, the Muslims in Longwu Township arrived in the area in response to a call from the reincarnation of Buddha in Longwu monastery. This call was made for business people from Hezhou (Linxia), Xunhua and other Muslim areas nearby at the end of the 19th century. The local market town, Longwu *Jiequ* (Longwu Street District) therefore emerged after the arrival and settlement of Muslims (and some Han). As the town has considerably expanded since the establishment of the Prefecture, particularly over the last two or three decades, the economic situation and demographic composition in this district has changed accordingly, which partially but fundamentally caused change in the educational structure.

There are four primary schools within the Longwu Township area, the First and the Third Primary schools (*yiwanxiao, sanwanxiao*), both of which adopt Mandarin Chinese as the medium of instruction. The Second Primary School, despite its 'ordinary' name, recruits Tibetan or Tibetan speaking minority students, and correspondingly adopts Tibetan as the main medium of instruction. The last one is a newly established boarding primary school for Tibetan speakers.[2] Among all the four secondary schools in the Longwu area, three are minority

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[1] Most figures or numbers in this section are extracted from HZZBW (1999) and TXBW (2001).
[2] There are also primary schools in Tibetan villages which exclusively recruit Tibetan children from the same or neighbouring villages, and instruct in Tibetan. Also see the previous chapter.

schools which cater for Tibetans or Tibetan speakers such as Mongols and Tu, and one is a mainstream or 'ordinary' school. Even across the Prefecture, there is only one Muslim minority school established in the Jianzha County, where Muslims make up 24.31 percent of the county population and 70.53 percent of the Muslim population in the prefecture (see table 3 on page 274). In other words, most Muslim families in Huangnan have to send their children to mainstream schools or Tibetan or Mongolian minority schools.[3] In the Longwu area, the schools where Muslim families can send their children for their primary education are one of the two mainstream primary schools, the First Primary or the Third Primary. The only mainstream secondary school for the Muslims is the Huangnan Prefecture Secondary School.

Muslim students mainly go to the First Primary that is located in the old town, the previous Longwu market area where Muslims are concentrated. The old town of the prefecture has experienced a gradual but significant change since 1953 when Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Region (renamed as Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in 1955) was established with its government sector located in Longwu Township, and particularly over the past two to three decades. After the prefecture was established, it quickly became apparent that the district where the old town is located in was too narrow and small for the rapidly growing seat of the prefectural government. Under these circumstances, a new town was developed between 1954 and the middle of the 1970s. From 1984, a town reconstruction project was embarked upon led by the Bureau of Urban and Rural Planning of Tongren County (*Tongren Xian Chengxiang Jianshe Huanjing Baohuju*). Most state-run businesses such as institutions, bookstores, trading companies or restaurants in the old town were gradually either closed down or moved to the new town. This led a number of mainly Han residents who were working in the state system to move from the old town to the new one. Meeting the requirements of these people for the education of their children, the Third

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[3] I have interviewed a Muslim parent whose family had moved from the Xunhua Salar (Muslim) Autonomous County to the Henan Mongolian Autonomous County, and stayed there for a number of years when her oldest son was at the age for schooling. The son was therefore sent to a Tibetan speaking Mongolian school with a reduced tuition fee since his mother was cooking for the schoolteachers and students there.

Primary was established in the early 1970s in the new town.[4] As a result, the percentage of the Muslim students in the First Primary rose compared to the Han population which had largely vacated it. This change eventually turned the Third Primary into the most prestigious primary school in the prefecture in spite of a shorter history than the First Primary, and this was cultivated by the government officials whose children were studying there.

This demographic move also meant that better-off customers (state employees) were drawn away to the new town. Gradually, a growing number of Muslim families had to close down their small stores or restaurants in the old town and open businesses in the new town where there were a significant number of better-off customers. At the same time, some more prosperous Muslim families in the old town who did not feel comfortable about living in the Tibetan autonomous region moved out from the old town to some Muslim regions nearby, as I was told by some Muslim community leaders and government cadres. After several years' 'upward' mobility of residents from the old town, the traditionally market area of Longwu Township came to mainly function as a 'self-contained' residential area of the Muslim community, which was characterised by a declining economy and with daily life based around the Mosque.[5]

This demographic change also impacted on the secondary education in the Longwu area. Originally there were two mainstream secondary schools in the Longwu area, the Huangnan Prefecture Secondary, which was located in the new town, and the Tongren County Secondary, which was situated in the old town (also see the previous chapter). As the demographic changes described above were unfolding, some Muslim families, following the Han families, also transferred their children from the County School to the Prefecture School after they moved their business from the old town to the new one. Nevertheless, this mobility was also propelled by certain educational factors. Firstly, the campus of the County School was vacated by moving it to a bigger campus in 1985 in order to further develop the County Minority School for Tibetans or Tibetan speakers,

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[4] New cadres from outside the town were also an important source of the growing number of Han households in the new town.

[5] A similar residential segregation of Muslims from other ethnic groups can also be seen elsewhere. See, for example, Liu (1997).

which at that time was located next to the County School. Some fifteen years later a new primary boarding school for Tibetans was established in the new campus of the County School. This is one of the instances that the government has placed less weight on the County School. Some other measures introduced at the time were that officials began to select students with higher achievement for the Prefecture School meaning that less able students went to the County School. This resulted in some residents in the old town preferring to send their children to the Prefecture School in spite of the 'go to school in the neighbourhood' policy.[6] These residents included a growing number of Muslim parents who not only tried to run their business in the new town, but also wished to provide their children with a better school education. This led those for whom education is key in enhancing their socio-economic status to envisage moving the whole family to the new town eventually, where they believed there was a better social and educational environment for their children.

Meanwhile, over the past decade or so, students in the Huangnan Prefecture School have kept moving out to the schools in Xining, the capital of the province, or its vicinities, an area named *Haidong Diqu* (Haidong Region) that people believe to have a higher level of education.[7] For the families of these students, it will make a significant difference to send their children out of Huangnan for a brighter future after a better education, so long as they can afford this. In other

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[6] I was told by some students and teachers from the previous County School or the Prefecture School that the government itself does not implement this policy strictly sometimes. One of the important alternative principles is academic achievement of students as can be seen above. In this vein, students who are residents of the new town but have a poorer school performance may be allocated to the previous County School. The reverse could also occur. This is closely related to another, if not more, important element, the social capital in relation to the state system that parents may have. In this light, academic performance and residential location might give way to the social network resources (particularly in relation to the state system) of a family in school choice. In this game, Muslims are usually the losers due to their lack of this valuable social capital. I will discuss this in more detail later on.

[7] I have heard that there were some 2,000 students, mainly secondary school students, from Huangnan studying in Haidong Region. The school official in the Huangnan Prefecture School denied this figure when I was trying to verify it with them. Instead, they told me a figure that they said was 'absolutely reliable': there were 300 secondary school students from Huangnan studying in Minhe County Number One Secondary School (*Minhe Yizhong*). Some public servants in the prefectural government told me that almost everyone working in the government at both prefectural and county levels had sent their children to Haidong Region or even some other provinces for secondary education. However, compared to the figure of students studying in both secondary and secondary vocational schools in Huangnan in 2002 that is 5787 (HZT 2003), the figure of 2000 may be a bit too striking to be accepted, but my estimation would also not be very far from this figure.

words, while the County School has declined substantially in the past decade, the Prefecture School has also been experiencing a certain decrease in student numbers. As a result, the County School was annexed to the Prefecture School in 2002. Its students, half Muslim, were transferred to the Prefecture School, and most of its teachers were dispersed to some primary schools, other state work units or left the state system for the reasons like retirement.

The educational level of Muslims

One Muslim community and three Tibetan villages

The normative criterion to assess the educational level is called the cultural level (*wenhua chengdu*) or the level of received education (*shou jiaoyu chengdu*) as explained in chapter four. This is carried out by looking at the number of years of education received or completed in the state educational system. The stage from primary to junior secondary lasts nine years and makes up nine-year-compulsory-education (*jiunian yiwu jiaoyu*).

Longwu Township administers all three Muslim administrative communities in the Longwu area, and several Tibetan villages surrounding Longwu Township. Among these Tibetan villages, those closest to Longwu Township tend to have a higher educational level than those further away. I have surveyed the educational level of one Muslim community and the three closest Tibetan villages. The result is shown in table 6 (page 275), from which some trends can be seen in relation to the illiteracy rate and college students rate.

- Traditionally Muslims in the Longwu area had a much lower illiteracy rate compared to Tibetans. The rate of the Muslims born before the 1970s is 24.70 percent. By contrast, the Tibetans in three villages who were born before the 1970s have an illiteracy rate of 44.58 percent on average (breakdown of three villages is respectively 41.03 percent, 42.56 percent and 50.30 percent).
- The illiteracy rate of Muslims has not been reduced as much as that of Tibetans over the past two decades. The rate of the former has been reduced by 9.84 percentage points and that of the latter by 18.73 percentage points. Even in absolute terms, among the Muslim population who were born after

the 1970s, there are still 11 people who are illiterate. On the contrary, among the Tibetans, the corresponding number is 30 for three villages, i.e. 10 for each on average. Among those born after the 1980s, the correspondent number for the Muslim community is 3 (2.17 percent out of the cohort) and for the three Tibetan villages is 2 (0.59 percent out of the cohort).

- At the other end of the spectrum, the rate of the Muslim population at college level is the second lowest in three age groups. The rate is not significantly higher than the lowest Tibetan group (T3) whereas it is significantly lower than the highest Tibetan group (T1). As a whole, the Muslim community does not appear to be in an advanced position in comparison with the three Tibetan villages at the college level.

In short, both from a developmental perspective and in absolute terms, the Muslims as a whole in the Longwu area have lagged behind in terms of education over the past one or two decades. This is particularly striking when taking into consideration the fact that the Muslims are urban dwellers whereas the Tibetans are rural.

The parents of the students in the mainstream school and the Tibetan minority school

Table 7 (page 275) is the illiteracy rate and average years of schooling of the parents of my respondents in both the mainstream school (MS) and a Tibetan minority school (TMS). The information here echoes the educational trend of the Muslim community.

In the mainstream school, the parents of the Tibetans and of the students from other ethnic backgrounds constitute one end of the spectrum, characterised by lower illiteracy rates (0 and 3.85 percent respectively regardless of difference caused by gender, the same hereafter) and longer schooling years (11.46 and 10.06). At the other end are the Muslim parents with higher illiteracy rates (28.33 percent) and shorter schooling years (5.54). As urban dwellers, the cultural level of Muslim parents of the children in the mainstream school is just slightly higher than that of the Tibetan parents of the children in the Tibetan minority school, the vast majority of whom are rural. In other words, these two groups possess similar

patterns, including the pattern of the gap between the father and mother. Therefore in the mainstream school where the students are from the urban areas, the Muslim students possess the poorest educational capital.[8]

The school performance of Muslim students

There are no official statistics available that set out the academic achievement of students along the lines of ethnicity. This problem became more serious after the County Secondary was merged with the Prefecture Secondary in 2002, because neither of the two schools held the achievement records of the students of the previous County Secondary, where Muslim students made up the half of the student body.[9]

As the Prefecture School became the only choice for the Muslims in Longwu Township, the Muslim students make up the second largest part of the student body (31.63 percent) after the Han (34.79 percent). The three sets of data in table 8 (page 276) were collected by me in the Prefecture Secondary. The first set (EJ) is the outcome of the end-of-year examinations of the junior third year students in 2002. The second (ES) is that of the senior first year students in the same academic year. The junior third year is the final year of compulsory education while the senior first year is the first year of post-compulsory education. The third set (EE) is the outcome of the senior secondary entrance examinations of the students in the Tongren area in 2002.[10] Some of them were studying in the senior first year of the school when I was conducting fieldwork there. Table 9 (page 276) is the ethnic population in the mainstream school in 2002-2003 and in Tongren County in 2002.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the data in tables 8 and 9:

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[8] This echoes a widely reported lower educational level of the Muslims in the borderlands between Qinghai-Gansu-Ningxia provinces. See, e.g. Liu (1997) and Ma Mingliang (1999).

[9] I heard from some prefectural leaders when I was staying there for my fieldwork that the local bureau of education (*jiaoyuju*) was compiling an educational yearbook of the prefecture as a gift for the 50th anniversary of Huangnan Prefecture. This yearbook was said to be comprehensive and detailed, covering all the figures from the establishment of the prefecture in 1953. However the date for it to be published was postponed to an unknown one.

[10] In order to enter the post-compulsory level, students are required to sit senior secondary entrance examinations (*zhongkao*) and must meet a certain standard. However, due to a decline in student numbers, in the past few years the school tended to take in all examinees, as I was told by a school administrator.

1. As a whole, the Muslim students perform poorly when compared to the students from other ethnic backgrounds. This can be seen in table 8.
2. The Muslim and Tibetan students account for 25 percent in Class One of the senior first year and almost amount to 50 percent in Class Two. The distinction between the two classes is determined by the grades of the senior secondary entrance examinations of the students. The better half of the students was allocated to Class One (key class) and the poorer half to Class Two (ordinary class).[11]
3. Although the percentage of the Muslim students in the ordinary class was only 1.5 times more than that in the key class while this discrepancy among the Tibetan students was four times, this did not necessarily lead to a better outcome for the Muslim students for the year as a whole (see ES in table 8 and SF in table 9).
4. The percentage of the Muslim students in post-compulsory education was significantly reduced from 40 percent (the largest group) in the junior secondary third year, the final year of compulsory education, to 26.04 in the senior secondary first year, the first year post-compulsory education. By contrast, the other three groups turned out to have a higher percentage at the post-compulsory stage (see JT and SF in table 9).
5. In the senior secondary entrance examinations in 2002, the number of the Han examinees was nearly 2.5 times that of the Muslim examinees (see EE in table 8). On the other hand, the Han population in 2002 was below two times the Muslim population (see EP table 9). This demonstrates the lower proportion of the Muslim students entered for the examinations.[12]

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[11] This streaming of students by academic achievement has been abolished officially on the principle of non-discrimination. This was also the reason why the school officials denied that they were still streaming students in this way when asked. Nonetheless, both the students and teachers in the senior first year told me that the students in this year were streamed though this was not a school-wide policy. For instance in the three years of the junior secondary, all classes were organised evenly in terms of gender and academic achievement of the students, and even in terms of ethnicity wherever this is possible to be taken into consideration.

[12] It is inappropriate to include Tibetan students in this comparison because the majority of Tibetans in the region are rural. According to my observation, almost all the Tibetan students from the Longwu urban area continued into the senior secondary study. This can also be seen from the difference of the percentages of Tibetan students in the junior third and senior first years, 8.72 and 9.60.

In short, in terms of school performance, the Muslim students tend to have a lower record in academic achievement and fewer will continue to study at the post-compulsory stage. In addition, in an interview with a Muslim community leader, I was also told that there were about 12 or 13 Muslim students who dropped out in this academic year, and all of them were in the junior secondary phase. This is to say that about seven or eight percent of the Muslim students in total dropped out. This is a high figure compared to what I was told in interviews with schoolteachers, administrators or parents – that dropout was not an issue concerning them, i.e. that dropouts were rare in the school.[13]

Pessimistic views of Muslim parents: a key force

An overview of Muslims and their school education

As expected, no Muslim parents told me that it is useless to send children to school. Meanwhile, there were two shared ideas regarding school education among them. One is that, historically speaking, Muslims did not particularly invest in school education, and such a neglect of school education meant that they lagged behind Han, and more recently (over the past one or two decades) also lagged behind Tibetans because of this continuing neglect (Interview 030201, -02, -05).[14] Second, there exists a disparity between cadres (*ganbu*) and ordinary people (*laobaixing*)[15] in the degree of enthusiasm for sending their children to school. While cadres tend to encourage their children to study hard in order to eventually go to university, ordinary people usually lack such an expectation about their children's future. In other words, what ordinary Muslim parents expect their children to do with education is to confine to achieving two primary goals: to receive some basic education in relation to literacy and numeracy in order to be able to deal with (mostly family-run) business and daily life; and to obtain a graduation certificate (*biyezheng*), an essential passport of qualification for the labour market. This is also reflected in another concern among some ordinary parents that they are worried about the possibility that their children would go bad

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[13] There was no dropout figure available to me. However, a higher dropout rate and lower academic achievement are a widespread phenomenon among the Muslim students in Gansu-Ningxia-Qinghai borderlands. See, for instance, Liu (1997) and Ma Mingliang (1999).

[14] This is significantly associated with the oppression of Muslims during the Qing dynasty as depicted in chapter four, which undermined or ruined the Muslim loyalty to or association with the regime and formal institutions.

[15] On the classification between cadre and ordinary people, see chapter six, footnote 6.

(*bianhuai*) after hanging around with dubious characters (*busanbusi de ren*) in society if they were not sent to school.

Nevertheless, their children can or are expected to stop studying when mature enough to help the family in business or with earnings. This usually happens when the children are fifteen years old or so, at the age when they just finish their studies in junior secondary schools, i.e. having completed the nine years' compulsory education required by the state. In addition, a tradition of getting married before twenty years old also makes many parents believe that it is the time for their children, particularly daughters, to stay at home preparing for marriage. I was told that to get children married is also the last obligation parents are supposed to undertake for their children as (Islamic?) tradition requires. Therefore, this age was regarded by some parents as a turning point in their children's life in many respects. This picture is slightly different from my observation in one way. The number of Muslim girls is not less than boys in post-compulsory education. One explanation is that boys can help in family's business or with its earnings whereas girls can do little in this respect. This view usually leads parents to keep girls in school. On the other hand, ensuring that girls remain in school is also particularly important given the fact that many Muslim parents are extremely busy with their family business and can hardly find time to keep an eye on the people off-campus their daughters might get to know and even hang around with if the girls were not sent to school. This also reveals that parents do not adhere strictly to the idea that their daughters should get married at a traditionally acceptable age, for example, sixteen, as their community used to do. This allows these schoolgirls to have a senior secondary or even higher education if it looks promising for their future.

However, on the whole, the historical 'tradition' of neglecting school education among the Muslims does not seem to have significantly reduced. This lack of enthusiasm for school study of their children is reflected in the poverty of their response to my question as to whether or not it is useful to send children to school. Instead, the Muslim parents from both cadre and ordinary backgrounds spent much more time speaking about the barriers they have encountered in the

larger society that are directly or indirectly associated with the school education of their children, and the resulting hopelessness

Barriers from the larger society

There are mainly three outlets (*chulu*) for their children that are envisaged by Muslim parents: to study in the Mosque or Arab countries with the aim of becoming a Mullah; to be engaged in family business or any other business outside state work units, i.e. irregular jobs such as temporary waiters, shop assistants or drivers; or to become a cadre working in a state work unit. To achieve any of these, they may or may not need to acquire a certain level of education in school although most of them nowadays are choosing to let their children have some schooling. Among the three choices, there is very limited demand for more Mullahs in mosques, and to go to Arab countries to study is not a better alternative either. This is because these children, mostly boys, will finally come back to China, and most likely, to this area; this is also because there are few families that can afford their children's study abroad. Last but not insignificantly, the change towards a knowledge economy also makes the idea of ending up in a Mosque much less desirable. They do not consider that they can learn the kind of useful knowledge, such as sciences or English, which will prepare them for a growing standardised labour market, both nationally and globally, in mosques.

As for engagement in non-state business, given the hardship of this kind of job and the sluggishness of the local economy, this did not appear to be a more attractive choice to them. Moreover, the local Tibetans started to take over quite a number of businesses from the Muslims over the past decade after realising how much they had 'lost' economically as they did not used to be engaged in commerce, a field that was traditionally dominated or 'occupied' by the Muslims. Due to the fact that the Tibetans are the locally dominant ethnic group, the withdrawal of Muslims from business, whether or not voluntarily, and the engagement of the Tibetans in it, whether or not it can be regarded as an expropriation (*boduoxing de*), is understandable as society is rapidly becoming more economically orientated. One of the means Tibetans employed, as I was told by one Muslim cadre, is to ask for higher rent from their Muslim tenants who are

running a small enterprise, usually a small store or restaurant, in the rented room(s). The higher rent will eventually lead to financial difficulty in continuing running the enterprise and result in returning the room to the landlord or letting it to others (Interview 030202). Another reason I deduced from what I was told by several different Tibetans is that there was an informal campaign of boycotting the Muslim enterprises such as restaurants or shops among the Tibetans, i.e. whereas it is possible, they will definitely consume in the businesses run by Tibetans rather than by Muslims. A Muslim community leader also offered an explanation that Muslims would rather move to a Muslim-dominated area, particularly the Muslim autonomous prefectures or counties in Gansu-Ningxia-Qinghai borderlands so long as they have plenty of economic capability to allow them to do so, because they have felt oppressed by the dominant Tibetans and have been living a tiring life in Longwu (Interview 030205). The enterprises these Muslims used to run were also abandoned as they left the area. Although it is hard to say that there are not other important reasons, from my observation there are fewer Muslim-run enterprises than when I visited Longwu eight or nine years ago. In the main commercial streets of the new town, half of the enterprises are run by Tibetans while only a few Tibetan enterprises could be found several years ago. The enterprises that can be found in the old town are even fewer as the district has been deserted commercially as portrayed earlier.

The last outlet for Muslim graduates is to become a cadre in a state work unit. This, compared to the other two outlets, is even more difficult though it may be more desirable to those Muslims who feel strongly in need of a better socio-economic status. This has several different causes. Among the current local government officials, Muslims are underrepresented, particularly at the highest rank, namely, at prefectural level (see table 5 on page 274). I was told that, historically, one of the deputy magistrate positions (*fu xianzhang zhiwei*) in the Tongren County government was allocated to the Muslims, but this is no longer the case. When asked why this is so, one of my Muslim informants who works in the county government said it was because in every election, (quantitatively) dominant Tibetans voted for their Tibetan candidates. This situation, after lasting for some years, eventually meant that the government itself could not be bothered

to nominate any Muslim candidates for election (Interview 030202). It is even more hopeless for the Muslims to hold a similar position at the prefectural level.

This disproportionateness of the Muslims among the top cadres has meant that the Muslim community as a whole lacks the social capital in relation to the state system. This directly affects the number of Muslims who are recruited by state work units as a cadre, either as an official or as a manual worker. Moreover, the perception that it is difficult for Muslims to enter the state system is also informed by the under-representation of Muslims in top leaders in the central government in general, and in the province in particular.[16] The top leaders of the prefecture or province seemed indifferent to this situation. This is anyway 'a Tibetan autonomous prefecture', almost all of my respondents explained. Another practical obstacle preventing some Muslims from becoming a public servant is that the state in effect discourages public servants to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca by making it difficult for them to get a passport until they are old enough, i.e. over 50 years old, when they are unlikely to stay on abroad (Interview 030202).

In the meantime, the Muslims who work in state units also have less opportunity for promotion. Almost without exception, I was told that this was because they did not like to have social intercourse (*yingchou*) with their Han colleagues because they would have to smoke, drink, play mah-jong or go to Karaoke as their Han colleagues normally do. Being able to do these things is regarded as very important for a public servant to consolidate with his or her colleagues. More than this, some Muslim cadres who wear their caps or veils are disgusted by some of their superiors or colleagues because these superiors or colleagues 'wanted everyone to look like Han,' and 'they would not feel comfortable until they could not distinguish on the basis of their appearance those who are Muslim from those who are Han' (Interview 030202). Under such pressure, some Muslims give way to these unofficial requirements made by officials, though they then face pressure from their family or community, especially from older generations (Interview 030203). Those who keep practising their customs would be 'kindly' reminded by their superiors from time to time that they had better not do so, or simply have

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[16] On the situation in Qinghai, see Ma Mingliang (1999).

their names removed from the list of any promotion or award opportunity, which is directly linked to their salary and cadre welfare benefits. The most striking case I heard of is one Muslim woman, who, after working in a work unit for more than twenty years, is still at the lowest position as her youngest colleagues who have been just employed by her work unit, although she has always been working earnestly and assiduously. Her superiors even (illegally) reduced her salary, and further threatened that she would be transferred to the canteen of the work unit as a cook, a person who is regarded on the lowest social stratum by traditional Chinese society. All this was because she 'stubbornly' kept wearing her veil on the work site (Interview 030202).[17]

Some respondents also talked about the possibility of working outside the Huangnan area. But in their mind this was also difficult if not impossible. As a Muslim, it is not easy to stay in Han-dominated areas in eastern China or some other regions where both everyday life and work would be difficult because of an unbridgeable gap between their lifestyle and that of the Han or other ethnic or religious groups. Furthermore, they also believed that they were not able to compete with the dominant Han or other local people because of a lack of the necessary cultural level or social networks. In conclusion, the ideal area for them to live and work is Gansu-Ningxia-Qinghai borderlands where Muslims are concentrated (Interview 030202, -05). Unfortunately, the GNQ region is among the physically harshest and economically most impoverished in China, and provides very limited opportunity and space for them to prosper. In comparison, in Huangnan, in spite of the domination of Tibetans, there is still some historically formed space in business for Muslims, though this is also threatened today.

In this light, while tuition fees steadily go up, to send children to school is not a more persuasive option. This is not to say that there is not a reasonable number of Muslims who would like to provide their children with a school education. This is reflected on two levels. On an individual level, some cadre parents insisted that it

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[17] This discrimination against the dressing customs of Muslims can also happen on other occasions in the larger society. One informant told me such a story in which he was teased by a conductor in a train journey when he was trying to defend a passenger who was being offended by the conductor: 'Look, it is not necessary to wear your white cap if you piously hold your religion in your heart.' 'This is the way in which I want to better discipline myself' was his reply (Interview 030202).

is necessary to have their children educated at a fairly high level, at least at a college level, and the higher the better so long as they can afford it financially. On a community level, some cadres or community leaders have realised the importance of encouraging their younger generations to receive a reasonable level of education to enhance the public profile and status of the community, which will in return create the opportunity to promote their economic performance. Nevertheless, due to significant barriers ahead of them as mentioned earlier, some of them, while expressing their definite willingness to give their offspring a school education, and also encouraging other Muslim parents to do so, presented their uncertainty and confusion about what they really need to do and to what extent they are able to manage this when confronted by the hard-to-overcome barriers generated in the larger society. When I asked a cadre if he would like to send his son to study in a Mosque in the end, he responded: 'in the future when he has a good command of Chinese, I would like to send him to the Mosque to study Arabic (i.e. Islamic knowledge).' It is also the same parent who told me as to how frequently he encouraged the parents of his students to place considerable weight on schooling when he had been a schoolteacher before becoming a cadre. He warned that the Muslim community would otherwise lose its political position in some 20 years' time (Interview 030202). These barriers become more serious when Muslim parents are ordinary people, i.e. without any relations with the state system. One of my interviewees told me how much *Chongcao* (Chine se caterpillar fungus) he had to keep giving to the leaders who were in charge of education in order to be offered a place for his son to study in a school, and how this did not lead to the result he expected after 'wasting' so much *Chongcao*, and that he had to go to see the magistrate twice before the problem was resolved and his son was accepted by a school (Interview 030206).

All in all, the Muslims generally feel marginalised in society, and particularly in recruitment to and promotion in state work units. This has caused the limited social capital in relation to the state system they originally had to decrease. Sequentially, this marginalisation has significantly reduced the opportunity and enthusiasm of the Muslims for participating in public life, particularly in the political arena. As a consequence, it seriously cast a pessimistic shadow on their motivation to send their children to school. In return, their social and political

status has kept dropping as their political and social awareness of participation becomes weaker. A telling example is that, when religious or community leaders are invited by government or school officials to participate in some public affairs such as sitting on the rostrum in a conference to promote an incentive for them to help recruit students, they will be deeply touched (see, for example, Teng 2002:269-270). They have apparently taken it for granted that they should be in a peripheral position to the centre of power, and normal participation in public or political life is seen as a bonus honoured by the government.

Barriers from the school

The enthusiasm of Muslim families for sending children to school is also affected by the school curriculum. This is reflected in their dissatisfaction about the school culture and what is being taught in school, and also in their desire for a Muslim minority school. In schools Muslim-related practice, such as praying, wearing caps/veils or leaving for holidays, is discouraged.[18] Concern with this among Muslim parents is common. As most of them put it, even if Muslim children are required to stay in school during the holidays such as Muharram, they cannot really concentrate on studying. By contrast, if they are allowed to go home for the holiday, parents and children both will be grateful, and in return they will support the school more actively. Nonetheless, Muslims, including Muslim teachers, are subjected to this form of ethnic penalty. In a Muslim-dominated mainstream school, a Muslim teacher decided to put on his white cap because he wanted to influence his Muslim students positively by publicly offering a model of disciplining himself in this way. As an unexpected result, one of the deputy head-teachers who had trusted and respected this teacher stopped speaking to him for a week (Interview 030202).

The more serious concern is that the curriculum excludes Islamic knowledge and the Arabic language from the teaching content. One community leader traced this back to the 1950s, when the Democratic Reform and Religious Reform terminated the course of Islamic knowledge that the school offered students. Until that time

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[18] Contrary to my expectation, few Muslim parents addressed the issue of a mixed gender school, which seems to be a concern among the Muslims that Gladney has observed (1999). This seems to be associated to the distinction between rural and urban areas.

he had been a primary school pupil and so had had an opportunity to study Islamic knowledge.[19] He insisted that introducing a course of Islamic knowledge, even if only for one or two hours a week, would be politically significant, because it would embody the equality policy of the state in the sense that this would promote the status of the Muslim community and their religion-centred culture (Interview 030205). This is a wide consensus among my respondents (Interview 030202, -03, -05, -06).

In terms of knowledge itself, most parents also expressed the importance for their children and themselves of having the opportunity to be educated in Islamic knowledge. They would otherwise become 'false Hui' (*jia Hui*). In other words, what concerned many parents is the potential sinicisation of their children while some parents themselves have already been sinicised since the education they had received is Han ever since they started to go to school. As a result, Muslim children and some parents resisted Islamic knowledge due to an atheistic education in school, which 'has already been branded (into their mindset)' (Interview 030203).[20] This tendency is undermining the grounds of their community in that they are worried that the Muslim, as an ethno-religious community, will eventually be silenced or sinicised.

Sinicisation of their children can be also carried out in school when their children are required to engage in entertainment activities such as dancing and singing. Parents said that to become famous in entertainment circles is recognised and admired by the Han and Tibetan, but not the Muslim. Nevertheless, there are also some parents who do not mind emulating the model advocated and promoted by the mainstream society and would encourage their children to develop themselves in any respects wherever possible, including entertainment such as dancing and

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[19] The relevant information can be obtained from HZZBW (1999:1430); Teng (2002:297); Teng and Wang (2001:197-198).

[20] Based on John Bowen's model generated from a Muslim Malay community, Gladney proposes a similar suggestion of two disparate streams in the transmission of Islamic knowledge – the Muslim community and the state education. These two streams are respectively characterised by those educated in Islamic knowledge and those in the Marxist-Leninist view of Islam and religion. 'This two track system has led to increasingly distinct public and private spheres among Muslims in China' (Gladney 1999:85).

singing. In so doing, they always face considerable pressure from the older generations as well as the community as a whole.

A call for Muslim minority school(s)

Due to the complex situation in terms of ethnicity in this area, Muslim parents do not expect to be offered a reasonable amount of Islamic knowledge in the curriculum of mainstream schools. On the other hand, they are also worried about the probable sinicisation after their children have been engaged in Han culture and entertainment activities in mainstream schools. With such concerns, Muslim parents wish for a Muslim minority school that provides students with Arabic or other Muslim languages (e.g. Salar) and religious content rather than one which merely offers a Halal canteen, as can be found nationwide.[21] In their mind, establishing a minority school with a relevant curriculum for Muslims would enhance enrolment rates of Muslim students. 'Even we adults would go to study if there was such a school,' the wife of one informant emphasised (Interview 030202). To back this up, they pointed out that because of the introduction of Muslim-related content in the curriculum, the enrolment rate among Muslim students in some Muslim autonomous prefectures and counties in the Gansu-Ningxia-Qinghai borderlands has significantly increased.[22] To further justify their suggestion, they also mentioned to me that across the whole country, there are few institutions where people can learn the Arabic language, and if this was introduced into the curriculum of Muslim minority schools, this would benefit both the community and country rather than do harm to the state. In other words, the country will benefit through cultivating personnel specialising in Islamic knowledge and the Arabic language, which is appropriate for an increasing development of the relationship between China and the Arab countries.

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[21] Gladney (1999) observed that Arabic language study is much more advanced in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region due to the influence of the Arabic script in Uygur and the proximity to Pakistan of the Region.

[22] Unfortunately, a higher enrolment rate does not necessarily lead to a better school performance according to some of my respondents who are from those Muslim autonomous regions in the GNQ borderlands. The main reason appeared in their descriptions is that (most) Muslims in these regions are rural. Relatedly, these Muslims appear more religious (Interview 030109, 010306, -07). For similar findings of poor performance of Muslims see Gladney (1999).

A desire for a Muslim minority school also reveals a concern about a safe space for the well being of their children in schooling. Muslims are generally perceived not to be interested in or good at schooling. According to some parents, since teachers hold such views about Muslims, they will be very likely to stereotype Muslim students: do you want to learn culture (knowledge)? Isn't it true that (Muslim) girls will get married and boys will run a restaurant when they are eighteen years old (Interview 030203)? Even Muslim parents themselves also encounter such prejudice. When some teachers reject views or suggestions about school education from Muslim parents, they will say: why do you have so much to say? You have just got such a (poor) child (Interview 030205)! It is even difficult for Muslim students with high academic achievement to avoid such a label from teachers: yes you are capable (of study), this is not easy for you (as a Muslim) (Interview 030203). Another reason for Muslims to call for a minority school is driven by the severe problem of bullying of Muslim children both within and without schools, which is very likely to end up with their dropping out from school. 'Because the police did not intervene, nor did the school', a parent said. One of his children experienced twice physically severe bullies and dropped out twice. This eventually put his school life to an end. In his words, his son had been one of the top students in the school every year, and it was an unacceptable decision for the child to withdraw from schooling (Interview 030206).

A call for a state-run Muslim minority school is reflected in the Muslim community's lack of confidence in the Islamic knowledge imparted in their community-based education. In their words, religious education offered by their community, either by older generations or the Mosque, is neither systematic nor deep enough (Interview 030202, -03). Some parents even said that they preferred not to send their children to the Mosque to study because of a concern with sectarianism, which is usually cultivated by religious leaders in the name of Allah. In the same vein, they would also not send their children to study in Arab countries, because 'children who are educated in different institutions or countries in Arab society will only be keen to establish their own sects.' 'The more there are such students, the more clashes there will occur between Muslims' (Interview 030201). Interestingly enough, both parents who either emphasised religious education or put school education in the first place shared the view that the state

should support and organise religious education for Muslims, since this would make the education of Muslim students formal and systematic, and would also avoid the clashes that may be caused by the Muslims who are running religious education themselves.

This desire for a state-sponsored Muslim school also reflectes their trust in the high level of the Han in terms of modern education. For many of them, it is very important to have an education geared to a type of society characterised by a knowledge economy. In this respect, they believed that the Big Han (*Da Hanzu*)[23] have a higher cultural quality (*wenhua suzhi*), i.e. plenty of knowledge which on the one hand is evident in their advances in scientific research for the larger society. On the other hand, their knowledge also enable them to provide their children with family tutorials. In a word, the high quality of the Han is what is needed in a knowledge economy society. This admiration of the Han has led some parents to transfer their children from the County School to the Prefecture School. Their explanation is that compared to the County, the teachers in the Prefecture discipline children more strictly, and the parents of most students there possess a high cultural level. These have helped build up an advanced ethos and a high quality of education in the Prefecture School. The reason for this is that 'there are more Han students and teachers in the Prefecture' (Interview 030201).

Nevertheless, their arguments usually ended up in pessimism. It would be extremely difficult if not entirely impossible to establish such a school in the Longwu area for two reasons: this is a Tibetan-dominated region, i.e. the Muslims do not have voice; the Muslim population is not large for a Muslim minority school.

To sum up, on the one hand, it is hard for Muslim parents to see the benefits that accrue to them by sending their children to school, and this has reduced their enthusiasm for doing so. At the same time, encountering physical or symbolic hostility from the national mainstream cultural group, the Han, or locally dominant group, the Tibetan, in the process of schooling or the larger society, has

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[23] This term is a reflection of dichotomous discourse of superiority of the Han and inferiority of ethnic minorities. Also see Harrell (1995).

also negatively affected the school performance of their children. On the other hand, they were well aware that their public profile and social status would be even lower and finally result in less opportunity for them to prosper if their offspring did not receive school education as Tibetans and Han are doing. Nonetheless, they feel confused about and hence struggle over how (and how far) to reconcile the two contested sides.

Students' struggle between different 'cultures'

As indicated earlier, Muslim students on the whole have a lower achievement than average. In my investigation, the highest achievers among the local Muslim students[24] are at the upper intermediate level. However, there are just a few students on this level. Most of them are among the lowest achievers. The most salient phenomenon relating to their school performance is that there is a reluctant attitude to school study that prevails among Muslim students. This can even be the case among the best Muslim students. Two of the high achievers, when asked if they would like to consider studying in the Mosque instead of the state school, clearly said they would. Their explanation is that to study the Koran, something familiar to them, would not be probably as difficult or tiring as to study the school subjects (Interview 010307, -10). Nonetheless, most Muslim students wanted to study in a Muslim minority school when compared to either a mainstream school or the Mosque. For them, to study in a Mosque is not realistic because they would not be able to access 'useful' knowledge, which would equip them for the labour market and a reasonably good life in the future. On the other hand, compared to mainstream schools, in a Muslim minority school they could study both 'ordinary' knowledge, as they are doing in the mainstream school, and their ethnic and religious culture. In addition, to study and stay with their Muslim peers would also make the study more effective and school life more relaxing. This would also comfort their parents in terms of the curriculum and tuition fees. 'The Prefecture School asks for quite high tuition. My parents are always complaining about this. If there was a Muslim minority school (though asking for the same tuition), they will definitely support me. Because this is good for both ourselves and our ethnic

[24] There is a Muslim student who has been the top student every academic year. Her family migrated from Shandong province, a coastal area and therefore very much sinicised compared to the local Muslim students.

group' (Interview 010305). However, three in nineteen respondents expressed a preference for studying in mainstream schools, because they thought there would be more opportunities to study something different or more time to study useful knowledge, and to benefit their social life rather than to only stay with Muslims. For them, their ethnic group is conservative, unwilling to improve itself by attempting to become open-minded. They did not explicitly deny the need to study Islamic culture but said that they had been already taught it at a very young age or they could teach themselves in the future. For the moment, 'to study (scientific and cultural) knowledge is the most important thing' (Interview 010303, -06, -13).

Nevertheless, for students who would either like to stay in the mainstream school or prefer a minority school, the fundamental obstacle they have faced in their study and life in the mainstream school is a deep feeling of discomfort. This discomfort is constituted by pressure from their community and family, and their school and the larger society, which is reflected in their confusion about and struggle for where to locate themselves in society in terms of socio-economic status, which are directly referred to their educational level, cultural identity and personal safety. In other words, they always found that their attempt to integrate these contested facets into a coherent whole had resulted in a tiring failure. A prosperous socio-economic future requires a relatively high educational level. In attempting to achieve a good school performance, they have confronted severe barriers caused by the prejudice and hostility towards the Islamic cultural tradition of their community.

Factors from outside the school

Although the abolition of assigning jobs to graduates in 1996 may have affected the motivation of Muslims to study hard in order to enter a university or college, the job ceiling Muslim students are facing is nevertheless a significant obstacle to sustaining their motivation to aim for high school performance. Two respondents complained to me that political leaders such as the president of the country, provincial governors or mayors, are all non-Muslim. In this region it is particularly the case that there is a very limited chance for Muslim graduates to find a job in the state system while this is relatively easy for both Han and

Tibetans (Interview 010304, -09). One of them considered that this is caused by the ethnic difference between Han, Tibetans and Muslims, 'that is to say, people tend to look down upon Hui (Muslim)' (Interview 010304, -09).

The most direct factors that have reduced the motivation of Muslim students in the mainstream school are those from family and school. Many student informants thought that their parents are concerned about their study, though in very different ways. Few said that their parents either are directly engaged with their work through supervision or checking,[25] or buy whatever they thought might help their children with their study so long as they can afford it. There are also some parents who are just interested in the examination results of their children, and more likely to humiliate them for their poor performance. Some students told me that their parents do not care about their study, or are even unhappy that their daughters must go to school in the evening and can hardly find the time to help their family with housework. In other words, for parents, to send girls to school is usually not a consideration associated with academic achievement,[26] but rather, a concern with a possible negative impact on their daughters from the outside world if they were not safeguarded by the school. As an understandable result, there are few, if any, Muslim girls who are among the top Muslim achievers. As a whole, few students thought that their parents would be able to effectively help them with their study because they themselves have a very limited educational level. In other words, they have to rely entirely on teachers' instruction in school for a better performance. At the same time, they felt that their parents keep putting pressure on them by requiring them to work harder or complaining that they have worked or consumed too much but without benefiting the family.

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[25] Though this was rarely the case given the fact that the parents of most Muslim students have received little or have not received school education.

[26] As a whole, female Muslim students do not seem to have a lower, but rather, a similar achievement compared to their male counterparts in my survey. One of the possible reasons might be that a number of Muslim girls have never attended school or dropped out at a very early stage, e.g. after two or three years study in primary schools while their brothers tend to stay much longer in schools. This is particularly the case in the ordinary Muslim families I interviewed. That the family needs someone to do housework when both parents have to stay away from home to earn money is one of the explanations.

Factors from inside the school

Low perceptions of Muslim students

The school, where students spend on average over 50 hours a week, has played the key role in shaping its students' attitude towards and performance in schooling. Why do Muslim students on the whole perform poorly in school? While other people gave a number of explanations, I heard little from Muslim students themselves. That is to say that on the one hand they tended to avoid invoking the explanations made by people from either mainstream or other ethnic minority groups, which are insulting in most cases. On the other hand, they themselves also tended not to comment on their achievement, usually say 'I do not know' instead. This does not necessarily mean that among Muslims themselves, nobody shared the views of Han or other ethnic members to some extent about their school performance. Indeed, comments from non-Muslims are actually a key element shaping both non-Muslim perceptions and treatment of Muslims and Muslims' self-perceptions and have therefore significantly influenced their school performance. In this sense, apart from the similar examples given by parents that are mentioned earlier, it is worth quoting what a Muslim girl (M) explained when I (I) asked about Muslim academic achievement (Interview 010304):

M: I feel that usually Muslims, anyway in my class, according to my observation, apart from X (a boy's name), all Hui students do not perform well. Normally it is Han students who perform well.
I: Then why is this so?
M: Everyone has said this that Hui are people born for trading business, but culture, that is studied by Han. All have said so.
...
I: So what do you yourself think about this (comment on Hui)?
M: I think, Han and Hui both are the same. Mainly because we Hui students, after hearing these (comments), do not seem to have confidence (in study, thus we do not perform well).

This is particularly relevant to secondary school students who, compared to their primary counterparts, are much more aware of the image that is generated from other's perceptions and comments. Therefore understandably, almost without exception, the Muslim low achievers I interviewed told me that they had performed very well or not badly at the primary level, and did not know why they could not do the same after entering the secondary school.[27] What has in

[27] Some teachers claimed that Muslim students tend to perform poorly from the very beginning when they start to go to primary school due to the poor educational capital they can get from their

particular drawn my attention is the association of Han but not Hui with schooling (culture-studying), as in the quote from the Muslim girl above. On the part of Muslims, this has two implications: 1) if a Muslim performs well it would be regarded as acting Han; 2) if a Muslim cannot perform well it would be natural, i.e. not a problem because she or he is not supposed to have the obligation to do well.

Thus, with reference to the school performance, Muslim students are perceived not to be able to perform well, and as a fact, they have largely performed poorly. This in turn has cultivated in non-Muslim teachers or students a negative perception, attitude or treatment of Muslim students. Although most of my respondents did not reckon that teachers were treating students differently because of the difference in ethnicity, but because of their school performance, some stories have obviously reflected the prejudice towards Muslims from teachers. When asked whether or not his teachers' view of him is different from his own, a boy who was the only Muslim student with high achievement in a class told me of a conversation which happened between him and the most understanding and open-minded teacher in his mind (Interview 010303):

> I think there is some difference (between my view and that of my teacher of me). When I transferred (from another school to this school) in the second semester, I was registering with teacher X. We were talking. She asked me which nationality I belong to, I said 'Salar (Muslim)', then she sighed. I was feeling (at that moment), this might be generated from the ethnic difference, (this) seems (to generate from) some sort of barrier (between different ethnic groups). Yes, it is.

In my observation inside classrooms, one of the common scenes is that Muslim students are mainly concentrated at the back of classrooms. 'The teacher arranges seats in the order of academic achievement. Higher achievers are arranged to sit in front of the classroom and lower achievers are behind.' This is what all interviewees said to me. 'We Hui usually sit behind... Han and Tibetans sit at the front... because we do not perform well' (Interview 010304). The main reason teachers make such an arrangement, according to my respondents, is that '...teachers do not want to take care of poor performers any more, and only hope that they would allow other students to study by disciplining themselves (in the

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family. In my informal observations, this is not the case, or at least not a phenomenon particularly associated with Muslims at the primary level. This no doubt needs to be explored further.

classroom)' (Interview 010308). 'The teacher said to the poor performers: since you do not want to study hard, please just discipline yourselves, be a good person, so that you can receive a certificate (when graduating)' (Interview 010304).

In this low view of poor students, these students are much less likely to be asked to answer questions in classrooms, and more unlikely to be believed when they have given a correct answer. Meanwhile, teachers tend to criticise them more often and cruelly (scolding or beating), and are more likely to ask them to send messages to their parents for a meeting with teachers, at which the students are complained about to their parents. This treatment has aroused complaints, reactions or rebellions among the students. They believed that it would help them with their confidence, motivation and performance if they sat at the front and were asked to answer questions more often; they also did not agree that all the students sitting behind were poor or bad. Some more radical actions are always taken by a few 'brave' girls and many boys, ranging from making trouble in classrooms, playing truant to dropping out. This is why most official punishments I could find on the public notice board of the school had something to do with Muslim students. Sometimes there are Muslim students who are trying to make progress by disciplining and behaving themselves both inside and outside classrooms but who are still likely to be driven back to the 'bad group' by teachers' careless punishment based on prejudice. A girl told me such a story about one of her fellow male students (Interview 010304):

> He is unlucky. He is recently trying to change himself, and making an effort to behave properly, but was asked again by the teacher to send his parents a message for a meeting with the teacher. He thus once again did not come to school recently. (Question: why did the teacher ask him to send the message to his parents if he was trying to change himself?) Before he started to try to behave properly, he was always playing, chatting, eating (in the classroom) with those (Muslim) boys, and was discovered by the teacher. But he was making an effort after these things, but he was still asked to go to see the teacher for what happened in the past, and was asked to send a message to his parents.

Cultural customs and the curriculum

Religious practices of Muslims are also informally monitored by the school. Muslim boys are usually discouraged from wearing their religious caps. Teachers would ask them not to bring their religious things (*zongjiao de dongxi*) to school, or would say that they do not look like a (serious) student in a Muslim cap, or

would simply scold them for making trouble (*shiduo*). One boy described what he encountered on registration day when he came to the school in his Muslim cap (Interview 010306).

> When I went to the school for registration, I was wearing a (Muslim) cap, and then it seemed that one of the teachers (after seeing me in the cap) said: 'the students (i.e. the Muslim students) from the street district (i.e. the old town) usually do not study hard. Do not register him!' Then I took off the cap, and was registered... (Question: so why did you put on your cap when going to register?) At that time I did not know (that it was discouraged to put on Muslim caps in this school). When I was studying in the First Primary, because the school is in the old town, I had been used to wearing (the cap). All (Muslim) pupils wore (their caps there), so I also did the same. I did not know (about capping) when I came to the new town (where the secondary school he is studying in is located)... However now nobody wears his cap, there are 23 Muslim students in my class (about half of the class), none of us wears it.[28]

Another clash that occurs between Muslim students and the school is about Muslim holidays. Muslim students said it is unfair that whilst the school had holidays for the Han and Tibetan new years, it requires them to go to school in Muharram.[29] As Muslim parents also tend to support children asking for leave in Muharram, I was told that students then took a more open and collective action against the school policy when told by teachers that they must stay in school. They collectively played truant that day. As expected, they were punished by their teachers when coming back to school. They were asked either to stand outside the classroom for several hours, or to write a self-criticism letter.[30]

They also felt uncomfortable about the curriculum.[31] They complained that there is little content concerning their ethnic religion or culture. Many of them were also not satisfied with the content because it is too simple and boring for the students who are interested in their ethnic culture, and false and a waste of time for the students who are not keen on religious issues. Due to the irrelevance of the

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[28] I noticed that there were some Muslim boys wearing caps when I arrived in the school on my first day. Interestingly enough, most Muslim boys I interviewed in the junior third year or senior first year were unaware of this phenomenon when I pointed it out to them. After close observation in the following several months, I found that the boys in caps were largely from the first two years, i.e. the junior first or second years. One explanation is that the older Muslim boys prefer fashion to 'conservative' customs of their community; another is that students in the more senior stage are disciplined more strictly, which it is believed could help them better concentrate on study.

[29] The Tibetan New Year roughly coincides with the Chinese New Year.

[30] After this 'accident', the school official passed a policy that Muslim students will be allowed to leave for half a day for Muharram in the future.

[31] Gladney (1999) attributes the reluctance of Muslims in schooling primarily to the exclusive and negative curriculum of Islamic knowledge and the mixed sex school environment. This seems to be a more complicated issue to me, as can be seen from the arguments presented here.

curriculum to their culture, some of them would show enthusiasm, motivation and confidence when coming across such content in textbooks. 'Last semester we touched upon the Koran in a history lesson...I usually do not understand history well, when talking about that (the Koran), because I myself knew it, and then it seemed that I suddenly became confident, that kind of feeling' (Interview 010302). At the same time, some other students would rather invest most of their time and energy in science subjects, less ideologically directed ones, although this may not be an ideal option. One of the students, when explaining the reason why the school curriculum incorporated little Islamic culture, said (Interview 010308):

> The school does not promote these (Muslim culture and customs). Teachers, they do not have this habit... They consider that these things of ours, for instance, Buddhism or Islam of Tibetans or Muslims, all are superstitious. Although (they know) they are religious beliefs, (they think) they are still a bit superstitious.

The linguistic issue also precludes them from full engagement in school study. They claimed that the local dialect they speak is '*gaidao hua*' (street language), which is different from *putong hua* (Mandarin Chinese). In the school all the students are required to speak Mandarin, especially in class. They described their embarrassment when they have to answer questions in Mandarin in class, because some of them feel this is acting Han while others feel unconfident and worried about the possibility of being teased by fellow students or criticised by teachers. This is particularly difficult for those who previously were students in the County Secondary, where they were allowed to answer questions in class or communicate with teachers in the local dialect because a high proportion of students as well as teachers in the school were Muslim.

The relationship between Muslim and other students

Another important reason why they felt uncomfortable in school is the relationship between themselves and the students from other ethnic backgrounds. Most of them told me that they tend to make contact with their Muslim fellows rather than Han or others when asked about their preference in making friends. They gave different explanations for this preference. Some thought that some Han students are too self-confident about their assumed high quality. They therefore would not like to make contact with Muslim students although some Muslims said

that they were willing to make friends with Han if Han accepted them. However the reality seems quite the reverse. 'Sometimes Han students spend time with Han students, and do not do so with us. Sometimes they do not want to tell us when we are asking them questions (in some subjects)...When playing football, we are divided into two teams, one is Han and the other is Muslim... (I think) sometimes they look down upon us' (Interview 010307).

This lack of understanding of Muslim students among non-Muslims can also be seen in some verbal insults directed at Muslim students. Some non-Muslims deliberately make a connection between Muslim students and Iraq, a negative image in their mind, during the Iraq War. Moreover, like their parents, they felt that bullying towards Muslim students is common, particularly that from Tibetans to Muslim boys. The bullying usually would develop into physical violence between Tibetan and Muslim boys, within and without the school. 'Tibetans are just violent.' 'They seem to be the principal enemy (of ours).' These are common remarks in their comments on Tibetans. A girl said this is because that 'some Muslims are very pious about their religion, and very honest. Some Tibetans or Han do not like these customs of Muslims... They are only used to their own lifestyle, belief or religion, and thus do not like ours, just (because they) are not accustomed (to ours)' (Interview 010311).

On the other hand, Muslim students preferred to spend time with their Muslim fellow students. Some explained that they have stayed with their Muslim fellow students from a very young age because their families live in the same district, the old town, and also because they share the same language and religious customs with their Muslim fellow students. All these factors would make it easier for them to understand each other and more congenial for them to spend time together. I pointed out that the 'language' they speak is one of many Chinese dialects, which can be understood by many Chinese speakers across the country in spite of some potential difficulties caused by different accents. Moreover, the local Han also speak this dialect. Even so, they still emphasised that all the Han people, both teachers and students, tend to adopt standard Mandarin Chinese over the local dialect wherever this is possible. Given the high social status of Mandarin in China and the Han's overly high perception of themselves mentioned above,

Han's preference for Mandarin Chinese is not difficult to understand. Hence, Mandarin was regarded as the language of Han, i.e. that of the 'Other' from the Muslim perspective, and the local dialect was thought to be the language of Muslims, i.e. that of 'Us'. In this light, they told me that they usually speak the local dialect because 'anyway we spend time with Muslims... and usually do not speak Mandarin. If (we) speak to strangers or teachers, (we) will definitely use Mandarin' (Interview 010304).

To sum up, the Muslim students felt uncomfortable in the school system. This is because they are perceived to be poor academic performers and trouble-makers, who are believed to tend to flout the regulations and rules of the school. The school also restricts them in religious practice and in the use of dialect, and provides little Islamic knowledge in the curriculum. The discrimination or bullying from students of other ethnic groups makes their stay in the school unsafe, which further exacerbates their negative situation in the school.

The influence of modern cultural values

Muslim students are also inevitably influenced by the epidemic which is modern cultural values. They are keen on music, painting, sports, fashion, internet, studying abroad, individual development,[32] or even shouting, smoking, drinking or sex, though to a lesser extent. Correspondingly, they have revealed less interest and knowledge in their religion-centred ethnic culture while all parents, as I was told, are concerned that their children study Islamic culture, although some of them do not feel it is so important or urgent to familiarise their children with the ethnic culture. These choices in modern cultural values, as they put it, are always discouraged or strongly criticised and opposed by either their parents or teachers, or both. However, they usually do not share the same opinion with either their teachers or their parents. They said that they are in the 21st century, they like being pretty or fashionable. They rebuked their parents as feudalistic, their teachers as too strict controllers.

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[32] When explaining why Muslim parents are not keen to keep their children in school after compulsory education, a boy offered this analysis: to go to school for some basic knowledge will benefit the family in business. More knowledge is not necessary for family business but good for the individual development of students in the future. So parents will not encourage them to study further even if they themselves might like to (Interview 010306).

This is particularly salient in the case of Muslim girls. Beside the viewpoints mentioned above shared by both girls and boys, when talking about family or community life, some girls were unhappy with the lower level of attention their parents paid to them than that to their male siblings regarding schooling, and with stricter control over their freedom. They said that because their parents consider that boys would have a promising future, and girls are not as good as boys; a girl should not go out, particularly in the evening. Rather, she should stay at home helping the family with housework (Interview 010301, -09). They also did not feel contented about the very limited opportunity for them to become a Mullah in mosques, which they considered to have reduced their career chances, although few of them showed interest in attending religious activities in the Mosque. 'Girls over 13 years old are not allowed to appear in Mosques unless they are in a veil.' They all attributed their absence from the Mosque to Muslim customs.[33]

In school, in sharp contrast to Muslim boys' attitude towards caps, none of them showed willingness to wear a headscarf. While they laid the blame on school discouragement of ethno-religious practice, they also explicitly expressed their disgust at wearing headscarves. Two girls explained:

> If you are a Muslim, you come to school in a headscarf... everyone will...tease you by saying 'disgusting, in a headscarf!'... So nobody (wears it), all of us care for face (*ai mianzi*)... Muslims themselves will also certainly say so: 'what? Wearing a headscarf in the school, in the classroom? Are you mad?' (Interview 010304)

> (That is) normal (for boys to wear) Muslim caps. (Fellow students) will not laugh at this... That is just a cap. If girls come along in headscarves, they will definitely laugh... When a girl is wearing a headscarf, what (we) will feel about it is: oh, a nanny is coming in (laughing)! (Interview 010308)

Some girls admitted that this keenness on modern cultural values particularly among girls has distracted them from school study. When I asked why they are more attracted by these things than school study, they tended to say 'I do not know' or 'the study in the school is too much and too boring', without particular

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[33] One student respondent told me that in his hometown in Gansu province, quite a number of female Muslims went to study in some mosques in the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, the traditionally cultural centre of Muslims in the Gansu-Ningxia-Qinghai borderlands, or Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu. A few of them, usually those who started to study earlier, became Mullahs; most of them went back home to play the same role of mother, wife or daughter in their family. The only difference before and after their study in mosques is that they may start to instruct their children or husband in the Islamic knowledge they acquired.

reference to girls. However, when speaking about the reason why they do not perform well in schools, a girl told me: 'anyway people all are saying this that after entering secondary school, boys perform well but all the girls have slowed down, fallen behind' (Interview 010304).[34]

Conclusion

The Muslims living in this region lack the social capital in relation to the state system, which is the preferred choice in terms of career for its power to guarantee a higher socio-economic status and financially secured life. Meanwhile, they also possess very limited cultural capital that will provide their children studying in mainstream schools with strong foundations. Therefore, education, the major way to achieve upward social mobility, becomes irrelevant to Muslims to a large extent. As a response, Muslims show little motivation, enthusiasm for and confidence in state education. Furthermore, their economic capital in which they traditionally stood ahead is being diminished because of the lack of competitiveness in a knowledge economy society. This competitiveness is derived from the social and cultural capital, and more directly, educational capital. This loss of economic capital in return undermines the other forms of capital among Muslims. In the course of losing capitals, community forces (Ogbu and Simons 1998)[35] have played the role of an initial dynamic that does not make school education a priority while this is the absolute priority nationwide, both at the governmental and the individual levels. The experiences of the Muslim students in the mainstream school have exacerbated the lack of motivation, enthusiasm for and confidence in schooling to the point of reluctance. This reluctance is grounded in their shared pessimistic expectations with their parents about their socio-economic status in the future, and in the prejudice and hostility they have received from individuals as well as institutions. The fundamental cause of the marginalised status of Muslims is that Muslims are still regarded as 'Other' both institutionally and individually (also see the next chapter) in many ways, although they have been settled in China, particularly in the northwest, for several

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[34] Also see footnote 33.

[35] Ogbu develops similar theoretical models in his other works though he does not necessarily employ the terms of 'community forces' and its opposite 'the (social) system'. See, for instance, Ogbu (1987).

centuries. One of my respondents evaluated the situation Chinese Muslims are in as follows (Interview 030203):

> (For Chinese), Islam is an imported religion, (Muslims) are not Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*). The state defined 56 ethnic groups, this is just to do Muslims honour. (It) only calls for unity of the 56 ethnic groups, but has not really given Muslims (as plenty of) preferential policies (as it has given to many other ethnic minority groups)... (The state) speaks 'we descendants of *Yan* and *Huang* emperors (*Yan Huang zisun*)...'[36] which is implying that you (i.e. Muslims) are not *Yan Huang zisun*. It reveals a tone of discrimination... (The state) has brought (some preferential) policies to you, provided your children with education, and let you have plenty to eat and drink, but still regards you as outsiders (*haishi ba ni dang wairen*).

Muslims in this region are hardly identified by the larger society as Chinese (Han) people unless they sinicise themselves, involuntarily or voluntarily, like many of their compatriots in China proper, by substantially hiding or removing their ethno-religious markers as many cases showed earlier. This oppression is more apparent among those who strongly encourage their children to study hard by emulating the Han model, and correspondingly do not regard it as appropriate to go to school with a recognisable Muslim appearance. A parent, when explaining why he did not encourage his child to go to school in his Muslim cap, said (Interview 030201):

> Here is a multiethnic area, Han and Tibetans do not consider this (Islam) is important, and meanwhile if they see a Muslim wearing a white cap, they will have some discomfort in mind due to the symbolic difference emerging through capping between Muslims and non-Muslims; furthermore, after class, fellow students will be driven by their curiosity to ask about the meaning of capping, about holidays, customs of Islam, and then about Muslims themselves, many questions. So if Muslim students do not wear caps, other children will not have such ideas as who is Han, who is Tibetan or who is Muslim. There will not exist such a kind of clash.

By and large, the Muslims' status quo, and further, their community forces, have been formulated in relation to the social system of public institutions (both schools and otherwise), to the majority community (also see the next chapter), as well as to other minority communities (the Tibetan in this case). In other words, when they have advantages as Chinese speakers and urban dwellers, they are quite ghettoised in the Chinese Han context of the larger society by the state, the majority and other minority communities. Ghettoisation has deprived them of both bridging and linking social capital largely as a result of their lack of Han

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[36] Legendary rulers of China in remote antiquity. This is taken to refer to ancestors of the Chinese people.

(non-linguistic) cultural capital. In the meantime, this ghettoisation also means that except for external constraints, the community lacks positive bonding social capital that is supposed in general to be able to benefit ghetto residents and assist social mobility. This is in particular the case in some Muslims' fear of sectarianism among the community so that they would rather hand over their cultural rights to the state in their call for a Muslim school. This is also true when their elites try to encourage their community to stress education, an effort which fails to prevent the continuing neglect of education among the Muslim masses as a result of the continuing exclusion of their culture from the mainstream society. This is in particular salient when compared to the Tibetan whose members have been mobilised in political, economic and educational arenas as illustrated in the previous and this chapters. This is the very reason that minority communities are divided into ethnic ghettos and enclaves in terms of (bonding) social capital (Loury, Modood & Teles 2005) that parallel the Muslim and Tibetan cases respectively in this study.

In a word, the Muslim status has been forged by external forces not only at a macro level of public institutions, but also at a micro level in relation to both the majority and other minority communities. Furthermore, this status has also been maintained by 'the damaging form' of its bonding social capital (ibid.:13). They therefore are placed in the position of a minority of minorities. As a consequence, Muslims have still to struggle over whether or not it is worth engaging themselves more in state education by investing significant energy and finance in it. It seems to be predictable that they will not become more motivated, enthusiastic and confident if they cannot see the social system delivering significant or substantive improvement with regard to the social and cultural recognition and accommodation of their community as a whole. In addition, Muslim school performance also hinges on whether or not, or to what extent, both parents and teachers recognise and accommodate the pursuit of modern cultural values prevailing among Muslim students so as to make an effort to reconcile the community tradition and the school culture with modern values.

Chapter Eight

The Mainstream Discursive Repertoires of Muslims and Tibetans

Introduction

Minorities' evaluations of their status in society against the mainstream as presented in the previous two chapters could be biased in favour of their communities. It is, therefore, necessary to invite the mainstream group's view on minorities to serve as a point of comparison with ethnic minority narratives.[1] This chapter looks at how the mainstream group in the school, both teachers and students, perceive Tibetan and Muslim minority communities and students. Through close scrutiny of the similarities and differences in the mainstream group's perception of Tibetans and Muslims, it will decipher the discursive repertoires in which the ideological agenda or discourse of integrating minorities into the mainstream develops. The relationship between discourse and discursive repertoire can be understood in the way that the study of discourse aims at the discovery and theorization of pattern and order. To achieve this goal, suggests Wetherell (2001), we need to explore three main domains or discursive repertoires in which discourse proceeds: the study of social interaction order or the nature of social action that is the fundamental building block of social life and social science; the study of social actors that is associated with minds, selves and sense-making; and finally, the study of culture and social relations or the historical and institutional features of discourse. In doing so, we can see how contesting or messy discursive repertoires are actually proceeding along the lines of the pattern

[1] While there are some studies focusing on ethnic minorities' perceptions of state policy and/or the mainstream group's treatment of them (e.g. Gladney 1996, 1997, 1999, 2004; Hansen 1999; Harrell 2001; Lee 2001; Postiglione 1999; Safran 1998; Schein 2000), fewer studies look at Han perspectives on the basis of interviews with Han about ethnic minorities, but usually analyse ways in which media, publications or state policy, etc. treat ethnic minorities instead. In 2001 'the first thoroughgoing study of Han perspectives about minorities' (Gladney. See the back cover of Blum 2001) was published. Given the heterogeneity and diversity within the 'Han' category (see Blum 2001, Gladney 2004) and the 'Han' discursive repertoires, it is certainly in need of conducting substantial and detailed case studies concerning Han perspectives about ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, as far as I am concerned, the kind of studies combining both minority perspectives about Han and Han perspectives about minorities, and to a lesser extent, minority perspectives about other minorities, has not appeared in publications.

or order of power that underlies discourse. This chapter concentrates on the second domain of social actors that is coupled by the other two domains in this chapter and others (chapters four, five, six and seven).

In this chapter, the mainstream ideological agenda is embedded in a familiar discourse of culturalism and social evolution that locates the Han and its culture on the top of the progressive ladder and is therefore, regarded as more advanced than both Tibetan and Islamic cultures, though in different senses (see chapters four and five). In the meantime, different members of the mainstream group show differential degrees of knowledge and recognition of minority communities. Unfortunately, this cannot change the fact that minority communities as a whole are still expected by the mainstream group members to make considerable cultural improvements if they want to significantly change the stereotypes that have long existed in the mainstream group's mind. In other words, they need to acquire the cultural capital that is believed to be the prerequisite for the knowledge and 'quality' (*suzhi,* lit. essential character. Also see chapter four) on which the right direction for the development of society is supposed to be based.

In Section One, I look at the mainstream group's evaluation of minority school performance in the form of their school attendance, dropout tendencies and academic achievement. Two separate pictures are sketched with regard to the Tibetan and the Muslim communities, which delineate the mainstream's differential perceptions of them as community forces influencing their children's school performance. Section Two examines the status of minority cultures and people within schools by looking at three dimensions: minority cultures and the curriculum, school policy on minority cultural practice, and the relationship between the mainstream group and minority students. Section Three explores the mainstream group's discursive repertoires about minority people and cultures. This is approached from four dimensions: the mainstream group's appeal for minority cultures; dispensable minority cultures; the mainstream group's perception of Islam and Muslims vis-à-vis the Han and their culture; and the mainstream group's perception of Buddhism and Tibetans in relation to the Han and their culture. Reflecting on the previous analyses, I conclude in Section Four

by probing the fundamental idea that underlies and forges the mainstream's perception of minority communities.

Minority school performance and community forces

School performance

In the mainstream school, both attendance and dropout rates are not a serious concern among teachers. All the teachers interviewed showed their satisfaction with these rates although some claimed there are still a few cases of truancy or dropping out. However, most teachers clearly expressed the view that the cases are more likely to occur with minority students, especially Muslim students. In their explanations, some thought that the main reason why Muslim students appear to be more visibly disruptive in behaviour is that the Tongren County School was annexed to the Huangnan Prefecture School in 2002, which brought in a large number of Muslim students to join in the merged school (Interviews 020102, -0202). Similarly, most of the teachers reported that minority students have a lower academic achievement on average, and Muslim students are particularly more unlikely to have higher achievement.[2]

In the case of the Tibetan students in the mainstream school, there seems to be a polarised tendency according to teacher respondents. Some students study very hard and are either among the top students across ethnic groups, or their achievements do not correspond to their efforts. Some others are simply at the bottom of the achievement ladder, mainly due to 'being lazy'. When it comes to Tibetan minority school students, without exception, all the teachers believed that the Tibetans in minority schools perform poorly compared to their ordinary school counterparts. This has two indicators. The separate school students are of low quality (*suzhi cha*), i.e. of disruptive behaviour. They tend to come to blows, to get drunk, or to wear eccentric clothes, to make noise, etc. In a word, they severely lack discipline. On the other hand, their academic achievement is also 'lower by several levels' in comparison to mainstream school students, particularly in science subjects (Interview 020103). Given the fact that the

[2] While official school attendance and dropout rates are not available to me, the information of academic outcome of different ethnic group students can be found in Table 8 (page 276). However there is not the corresponding information available regarding minority schools.

majority of Tibetan students are studying in minority rather than mainstream schools, the Tibetan school performance in Huangnan as a whole is lower than the mainstream group students. In other words, the number of Tibetan students with high achievement (in the mainstream school) is very limited and hence cannot represent the Tibetan school performance as a whole in the region.[3]

The system

A range of factors determines the 'low quality' and low achievement of minority students. In the case of the mainstream school, a few teachers alleged that the school policy might be unfair on minority students. This unfair policy is usually driven by the pursuit of high scores of students, which is directly linked to the benefits teachers are entitled to. The school designates different ratios of students who meet certain score levels in some key examinations, such as national college entrance examinations or regional entrance examinations for senior secondary schools. Teachers complained that they have to try every way to meet designated ratios, and face salary deductions if they fail to meet these targets, as a form of punishment. They also admitted that, as a result, students face high pressure from their teachers who will punish them physically or otherwise if they do not satisfy teachers with expected scores. These are apparently similar views to those held by minorities presented in the previous two chapters. Under this pressure, students' enthusiasm and motivation for school study tend to be undermined considerably. Even so, to be included in the ratio group by teachers is still desirable to students (though there is no visible line explicitly drawn by teachers between the ratio group members and the excluded).[4] This will significantly help guarantee the

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[3] Again, there is no relevant information regarding minority schools is available. However, according to the minority school officials, their students usually enter local minority universities, which set lower entry requirements than regular or mainstream universities do. Meanwhile, there are about one thousand and five hundred Tibetan students studying in three secondary minority schools in the region, while only about some seventy or eighty studying in the mainstream school. Also see chapters six and seven.

[4] Indeed, this in theory may cause confusion among students with regard to whether or not they are included in the ratio group. In reality this is rarely the case. The most important way through which both students and teachers get to know, though may be inaccurately, the division between the included and excluded is to look at publicised league tables of each half-of-semester (*qizhong*) and end-of-semester (*qimo*) examinations. Since there is rarely dramatic change with regard to ranking of students on different league tables, and at the same time the school official designates certain ratio to each class, it is not difficult for teachers to select corresponding ratio of 'cultivatable' students from the class. Nevertheless, there is still a buffet zone between high and low achievers where a certain number of students are situated. These students are usually expected

high achievement of the selected students while not being selected simply means that teachers abandon some students from 'cultivation' (*peiyang*). As minority students usually do not perform better, or do significantly poorly, there are only few individuals who are included in the ratio group for 'cultivation' as teachers in fact have been forced by the school policy to do so (Interview 020104). In short, due to the low academic achievement of minority students in general, they are most likely to be abandoned by their teachers. This is true, in relation to classroom study primarily, and in disciplining with the consequence that many drop out without the teacher making any effort to keep them in the school (Interviews 020102, -04).

A few teachers also partially attributed poor minority school performance to the societal environment. This is particularly connected to the Muslim students. They explained that nowadays the government does not allocate jobs to college graduates as it used to do. The new policy affects parents in that it becomes quite pointless to send children to colleges or universities. 'Because many Hui are ordinary families (i.e. no people work in the state system), from a social relations perspective, they do not have a strong background. They are hence relatively realistic' (Interview 020104). This means that Muslim parents do not believe that it will make difference whether or not their children hold a college degree – they anyway are very unlikely to find a job after graduation, unless they have got the kind of social connections with the state system as many Han and some Tibetans do. It is thus unnecessary to keep children in (particularly senior secondary) schools, which will expectedly lead them to college.[5]

Teachers also claimed that the school policy formulated for minority schools is not as strict as that in the mainstream school although it has still to focus on

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to perform as well as possible, and therefore will be monitored by teachers rather than be excluded.

[5] This is also a consensus among Muslim parents and students as my interviews with them showed. They complained about the 'unfairness' in finding a job in the state system. They thought that due to a lack of connections with state work units, when Muslim students are equally good school performers compared to their Han or Tibetan peers, they are very unlikely to be offered a job in the state system in competition with the latter. For further information with regard to the social status/background of Tibetans and Muslims, and how this affects their competitiveness in the labour market in general, and in recruitment by the state system in particular, see chapters six and seven.

college entrance examinations. They explained that this is in tune with the government policy of positive discrimination that is characterised by relatively lower requirements for college entrance examinations for minority students. At the same time, the positive discrimination policy also means that minority schools receive more funding from the government.[6] The positive discrimination policy is regarded as producing less academic pressure but a relatively secured financial situation for minority schools. This factor, said teacher respondents, has undermined the dynamic of the quality of education in minority schools.[7]

Another factor is related to teachers. According to my respondents, the government assigns teachers of higher educational levels (automatically coupled with 'higher quality' in their minds) to mainstream schools and those of lower levels to minority schools. A lower educational level can also be caused by cases like teachers not doing what they have been trained in (*xuefeisuoyong*). One extreme example I was told about is that a college graduate who studied fine arts was assigned to a Tibetan village school to teach English. 'How can he improve himself? And how can he enhance the quality of his students?' (Interview 020104).

Community forces

However, the dominant view that teachers have is that the poor performance of minority students in both the mainstream and minority schools is owing to the educational level and/or the attitude of their families that have decisively affected minority school performance. In other words, while attributing poor minority school performance to a variety of elements, they regarded community forces as being fundamentally responsible for the poor minority school performance.

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[6] There is no such 'extra' funding for ordinary schools regardless of whether or not these schools have minority students or how many they have. On the other hand, minority students from mainstream schools are equally entitled to sitting college entrance examinations catered for minorities. This means that they can take relatively easy examinations, and enter, mostly, minority universities that set out lower entry requirements than mainstream universities. However, minority students from mainstream schools tend to sit nationally standard examinations so long as they consider they are capable to try. This choice will lead them to study in mainstream universities rather than minority ones, and therefore allow them to stand on an advanced footing in the labour market compared to their counterparts from minority universities. Another reason that they want to enter mainstream universities is that most of them can speak very limited mother tongue Tibetan, since they are sent to mainstream primary schools or even kindergartens by their, mostly, cadre parents.

[7] Head-teachers in the minority schools in the Longwu area complained that more financial aids went to minority schools in more impoverished and remote areas, which produced less effectiveness.

Tibetan students usually face linguistic barriers in the first instance, which make it difficult for them to study efficiently and effectively in schools. To overcome this barrier, it was said that the majority of Tibetan cadres[8] have sent their children to mainstream schools ever since they started schooling, either in the prefecture or elsewhere. Moreover, these cadre Tibetan parents also pay close attention to their children's study. However, this cannot guarantee good performance. One of the important reasons is that, as many teachers told me, students who do not study hard feel that since their parents are government officials or other kinds of cadre, they can have a job anyway after leaving school. This can be done through their parents' social connections, which are rooted in the social status that derives from working in the state system. As a result, these children might become very careless about their study.

Nonetheless, that some Tibetan parents do not share the same value of sending children to Han schools, said my teacher respondents. Quite the reverse, what these parents have in mind is that 'I want to preserve my own culture' (Interview 020102), so they send their children to minority schools. More than this, according to my teacher respondents, they even also want all the local Han people to learn Tibetan. This is because in this prefecture there are a large number of Tibetans. They consider themselves to be the dominant group, nor do they reckon themselves to be inferior to the Han as they did in the past. Furthermore, government policy also encourages and stresses the development of ethnic minority education. As a result, I was told, there are relatively many Tibetan minority schools in the prefecture.[9] However, the real number of Tibetan parents working in the state system who have sent children to minority schools is small, 'the majority is rural' (Interview 020203, -04).

Indeed, as all the teachers in both the mainstream and minority schools I interviewed said, Tibetan children who attend minority schools usually come

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[8] People working in the state work units regardless of their occupation, government officials or manual workers. For more information concerning 'cadre' and its opposite 'ordinary people', see chapter six, footnote 6.

[9] In 2003 when I was doing research there, there are three secondary and two primary Tibetan minority schools, and one secondary and two primary mainstream schools in the township. For a developmental chart of minority education in the region, see chapters six and seven, and HZZBW (1999).

from rural areas with limited 'merit', which makes their study especially inefficient and ineffective, although as a matter of fact the majority of the Tibetan school students are very studious, as all the teachers reported. These Tibetan students do not speak Chinese well due to the background of their own language. Their comprehension of school subjects is poor too. This is because they lack a foundation in what is being taught in schools, to which they were underexposed in their rural environment before moving to secondary minority schools. In addition, some teachers also explained that their parents cannot help in any way due to illiteracy or a low educational level. At the same time, the secondary minority school students are usually required to board in the school; it has become impossible for their parents to monitor their study even if they had the intellectual capacity. It was believed all of that would become severe barriers for Tibetan students to achieve highly. At the same time, some teachers also believed that the relatively loose school discipline and lack of parents around make it easy for some Tibetan school children to go out drinking or making trouble. These factors make it difficult for them to devote themselves to school study.

Compared to the comments on Tibetans that largely focus on linguistic and cognitive issues, teachers perceived that Muslim community forces are more complicated and deep-rooted, so harder to eliminate. Whilst there are both Tibetan and Muslim students in the mainstream school, the former are children of cadres, 'though they are Tibetans'; unlike Tibetan students, the latter 'have parents of self-employed businesspeople' and live in the old town, 'which is simply a Muslim village' (Interview 020103). This difference results in distinctive attitudes towards schooling as I was told. Whereas Tibetan cadres were said to pay close attention to their children's education, Muslim parents are busy making money everyday, and do not have time to contribute to their children's study. This shortage of time becomes more serious when children are from a single parent family. A teacher inferred that because Muslims are travelling around frequently for business, it easily invites marriage crises and finally leads to divorce (ibid.). Divorce is more likely to leave mothers looking after their children on their own. A female teacher sympathetically pointed out that this is particularly difficult for Muslim girls who are studying in schools. They are more likely to be asked to withdraw from schools when the family needs someone to help with housework;

moreover, Muslim girls have to stay at home doing whatever they can while their male siblings can relatively easily go out to find a job when their single mother cannot afford their study anymore.

Furthermore, Muslim parents are also said not to be enthusiastic for education. One teacher told me about a consensus among teachers with regard to Muslim parents (Interview 020202):

> They (teachers) say that at home (Muslim) parents tell (children), 'you just go to school like this, no need to work hard. It would be fine so long as you will have a certificate in hand when you graduate from Junior Three (*chusan*, the final year of compulsory education). Just learn some (Chinese) characters, then go to do business.' Parents speak to children in this way very directly, and then they (children) do not work hard.

Other teachers held a similar view of Muslim parents. They all thought that it is not good for Muslim children to have parents who have their own business, which is actually spoiling Muslim children by fostering laziness among them. Muslim children will think that their families have a shop, or a restaurant, where they can always go to do something after graduation, or even without graduating. 'It is anyway not the end of the world' (Interview 020102). Under such circumstances, teachers deemed that Muslims are driven by the idea of material benefit, and all other things should run around this life goal. Guided by this goal, teachers concluded that Muslim parents also tend not to send children to kindergarten (a place that is regarded by mainstream parents as a significant starting point of the socialisation of their children), which is more useless for the skills their business needs, and just involves spending money. In the same vein, teachers also considered that for Muslim parents, to send children to schools is also merely to enable them to acquire basic literacy and numeracy knowledge that will equip them with basic (and enough for Muslim parents) skills for business. On the other hand, schools are also regarded as serving as a 'nursery' that can keep their children away from an increasingly unhealthy and chaotic societal environment. This 'nursery' idea has particularly annoyed and insulted some teachers, who defined this as 'typical' Muslim thought (interview 020104). In a word, Muslim parents were blamed for having no lofty ideals, and so no enthusiasm for the education of their children.

Teachers believed that Muslim parents are not keen to provide their children with education. This is largely because of their own low educational level (*mei shenme wenhua*, lit. have little culture). Whilst Muslim fathers were reported usually to have low educational levels, Muslim mothers were thought not to have received school education at all and so are illiterate (*wenmang*, lit. script blind).[10] With such a poor educational background, some Muslim mothers in particular only know the *jingming* of their children (lit. sutra name, i.e. nicknames of their children that are derived from Koran), but not their formal names, as I was told.[11]

A teacher gave me an example to justify her argument, which happened in a parent-teacher meeting (Interview 020104):

> There was one parent who struck me most. She ran to me, with the grade report form (of the class) and said: 'teacher, could you have a look for me at where my child (his name) is (on the report form)?' Can you guess how she held the form? She simply held it upside down. Then I said: 'parent, your kid is here.' I reversed the form to show her.

This inadequate educational level among Muslim parents, their little enthusiasm for but pragmatic attitude to education, are all believed to have been a seed-bed for the lack of motivation of their offspring for education. Community forces are perceived to have played such a negative force in the education of Muslim children that some teachers claimed that even though some individual Muslim students have good school performance, this has not been on account of their parents (Interview 020203). On the other hand, teachers judged, even Muslim students who would like to do well because they have realised the importance of education cannot understand this as deeply as Han students. They simply do not have parents who hold positive view towards education. Eventually, according to a teacher, all the negative community forces lead to Muslim children's inferiority complex in schooling.

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[10] Also see Table 7 (page 275).

[11] One of the possible reasons of ignorance of their children's formal names among Muslim mothers is that formal names are usually given by fathers, which just serve to enrol in schools. In fact in Chinese, formal name is termed as 'school name' (*xueming*). Relatedly, school names of Muslim students have nothing to do with their nicknames but an imitation of the Han naming tradition. Given the close connection between the (Chinese) naming and its cultural tradition, it is not surprising that Muslim children's formal names are difficult, and also unnecessary, for illiterate Muslim mothers to (fully) understand or memorise.

Han students also echoed their teachers' evaluations about their Tibetan and Muslim fellow students. For instance, they pointed out to me that both Tibetan and Muslim students are similarly easily influenced by people in the wider society in a negative way. The explanations they gave for this tendency among minority students are that their minority peers want to repress others when they go out to make friends who are hooligans in society (the evidence of their moral inferiority), or they feel free outside the school (the evidence of their lack of discipline). One student further elaborated that usually teachers look down upon minority students because they do not have high achievement. This treatment drives them to find something alternative to do, by which they can show their value or power. Furthermore, they did not think that Tibetans have as serious problems as Muslim students do. Like their teachers, they largely laid blame on the Muslim community that they did not think is a positive force for Muslim children to study in schools. Muslim parents in their mind are backward in their thinking, of a low cultural level and are materialists, and this has driven them to discourage their children's study by telling their children that they just need to get a certificate for a diploma-dominated society (*wenpin de shehui*). Having held such a view, they do not help at all with their children's study while this is common in Han families. The way in which they treat their children was also reported to be simplistic and rough, such as beating and scolding at will when they do not feel satisfied by their children. This treatment has damaged their children's enthusiasm for study. This negative treatment also includes such stories that Muslim parents tend to complain without caution that their children have spent too much money on schooling. This is always a serious mental pressure on children. In a similar fashion, students told me, Muslim parents would rather make their children start to work for the family business as early as possible. In all cases, Muslim girls are the first sacrifices, because, according to my Han respondents, in the Muslim community men are superior.

In short, the mainstream group considered that minority students by and large perform relatively poorly in schools when compared to Han students. This is mainly caused by some objective elements like the linguistic barriers, which make Tibetan students study inefficiently and ineffectively. On the other hand, the poor performance is also caused by a number of subjective factors particularly in the

Muslim case, though there are a few societal causes but these are not deemed to be determinants. Linguistic barriers could be overcome if Tibetan parents did not insist that their younger generations should prioritise Tibetan language study in order to preserve their culture, and send their children to Tibetan minority schools. The subjective factors are embedded in the 'nature' or 'history' of the Muslim community, which is closely associated with their low educational level, and results in their discouragement of, complaints about or even sacrifice of their children's education, particularly education of their daughters. Having been impacted by these kinds of community forces, Muslim students appear to have little enthusiasm, motivation for and confidence in schooling.

The status of minorities and their cultures in schools

Minority cultures and the curriculum

Without exception, all the teachers interviewed admitted that there is little space for minority cultures in the curriculum. The primary reason is that they did not think that the school can find more time to allocate to such a subject. This is because students have too many subjects to learn, which are designed with reference to the national college entrance examinations, in which minority cultures occupy little space. For the same reason, the syllabus is designed in close accordance with college entrance exams. It is impossible for teachers to go beyond the syllabus (which is also nationally standardised) for two reasons. They can hardly find time out of their 'normal' teaching task to deal with minority cultures, although very few teachers said that they tried their best to introduce as much knowledge of minority cultures as possible in their class. Secondly, as schoolteachers, they do not enjoy the same freedom in classrooms as their counterparts in universities, where one of the major educational principles is to encourage both professors and students to challenge orthodoxy through exploration. In a word, in secondary schools, for both teachers and students, every effort should be made to focus student attention on college entrance examinations, in which there is little space for minority cultures.

On the part of teachers themselves, some of them admitted that teachers' lack of knowledge of minority cultures also makes it difficult to offer relevant knowledge to students. This is especially salient among the younger generation of teachers,

some of whom emigrated from Han-dominated areas to this minority region when assigned a job in this school by the government after their graduation some years ago. They would otherwise have no knowledge of minority cultures at all, as they themselves admitted. Moreover, even if students need or want to learn something about minority cultures, they were supposed by some teachers to be able to reach that goal in their daily life when they are spending time with their fellow students from different ethnic groups – students anyway spend most of the daytime in schools. Meanwhile, even if the school is willing to introduce such a course, from a technical angle, some teachers did not think it is feasible given the variety of their students' ethnic backgrounds. It is difficult to keep a balance and at the same time to explain distinctive cultures clearly.

Another teacher, when explaining why there is little teaching content tackling minority cultures that are religion-laden, claimed that religion might play a negative role in minority school performance (Interview 020203).

> If a student is too pious in regard to religion, it will certainly invite a clash with our moral education...especially in such an era and environment (in which society is becoming more secular and materially-driven)... for instance Islam...ultimately aims to...enable (its disciples) to enter Heaven. We now advocate atheism...there is no such things as ghosts or gods. Our ultimate goal is to realise communism (which is associated with materialism).

Correspondingly, the very limited content concerning minority cultures in the classroom can only be found occasionally in such courses as 'ideology' (*zhengzhi ke*) or 'history', for the goal that a teacher of ideology depicted (Interview 020104):

> (We) introduce something (in the ideology course) simply about the three major religions in the world, ...something like the source of religion, its functions. It (religion) fundamentally advocates certain kinds of worldview. (We) mainly tell students that it (religion) is an idealist worldview, ...and pinpoint its functions, ... emphasise its negative functions...

Equally, the Han students also demonstrated that there is little content of minority cultures in the curriculum. Meanwhile, teachers showed little enthusiasm for teaching minority cultures, 'because people inhabiting this region have already got used to minority cultures and customs, there is no need for teachers to mention them more', so explained a student (interview 010109). In parallel, some students considered that it is a part of everyday life to spend time with minority

students, who will quite often tell them something about religion, festivals, etc. Some other students felt that the methods teachers employed in teaching minority culture have made the study boring. 'If he taught better, ...we would like (to study). But I feel it is boring to listen to the courses that teachers have offered' (interview 010105). There are also some students who complained about the content of minority cultures in the textbooks because it is mostly 'about war and occupation of a country, etc...all very political, not cultural' (interview 010104). In short, both teachers' lack of time, knowledge and enthusiasm for teaching and mainly political concern with minority cultures in the curriculum have principally undermined students' interest in and motivation for studying minority cultures.

School policy on minority cultural practice

School policy on minority cultural practice in the school is not expressly provided. This is why some teachers could not confirm the existence of the relevant policy when asked. However, teachers admitted that there are some requirements concerning minority cultural practice. These requirements are communicated to the teachers at a managerial level. One of the informants, who has both teaching and administrative duties, recalled a meeting that took place some years ago, at which the head-teacher publicised his requirements for minority cultural practice in the school (interview 020104):

> ...for instance among the Hui teachers in our school, there are some females. If a Hui family has a strict tradition of family education, the female must wear all the things required after getting married. I remember it was 1997, our head-teacher said that we are the Han school, all staff must not bring minority customs and habits into the school... As it requires teachers like this, there would be even stricter in requirements for students.

Since this is merely an implicit policy, when it goes down to the student level, their understanding of whether or not there exists such a policy becomes very vague. While a few students declared that the school should have regulations (for other things as well as religion), most students believed that minority students tend not to practise their religious customs just because they would be embarrassed. However, some of them admitted that the school culture is based on Han culture. On the other hand, teachers were usually more aware of the existence of such a policy than students were, though they expressed things differently when asked about their evaluations of and attitudes to it. When the invisible

policy is being implemented on a massive scale by ordinary teachers, the methods that teachers employed could vary to some degree because of the different preferences of teachers and their differential understandings of the policy. Some teachers said that when they see students in Muslim caps or Tibetan dresses they will take this as a resistant message students are trying to deliver, or a disruptive behaviour that needs to correct, and thereby will ask them not to do so; some others openly expressed their hostility to Muslims and hence tend to exercise control over Muslim dressing more strictly.

Nonetheless, the majority of teachers told me that usually teachers tacitly approve of some religion-based minority cultural practice because 'this is their religion (so we should respect it)' (interview 020103). Usually teachers do not intervene much into minority cultural practice, particularly when it occurs during minority festivals or on other special occasions. Equally, teachers tend to permit minority students to leave for their festivals (possibly without consulting with the school official in order to avoid 'unnecessary hassles'), though this used not to be a tradition in this ordinary school. Correspondingly, if some minority students break the law to practise their religious customs, they are not punished too seriously, 'because these students lack (the ability to) take responsibility for their conduct. The school and we teachers must correct (their mistakes)' (interview 020203). Some other explanations of why teachers are not too hard on minority cultural practice are that teachers are essentially expected to closely monitor the academic achievement of every student, which occupies most of their energy and time so that they can hardly find extra energy and time for anything else (interview 020103).

However, to sinicise minority students by monitoring their cultural practice, though not very formally, is a definite (though hidden) agenda of the school official, as a teacher put it (Interview 020203):

> Take Islam as an example. Their... festivals are always clashing with our regular teaching time... It is impossible to set a precedent for them (for everyone in the school should be treated equally). That is why in this respect our school has not made (a decision) of permitting them to leave for

their festivals.[12] As for dressing, we...still require that students should come to school in more popularised clothes (*dazhonghua de fuzhuang*), i.e. more sinicised clothes. Do not obviously show (minority) ethnic style clothes. So the school does not advocate (minority clothes)... Religious activities should be practised in religious venues. By and large, the school is (a place where) the state cultivates people who will serve its own class and this polity, especially in this special (multiethnic) environment of the school, it must not permit (religion-centred minority cultural practice).

This is why Muslim students, who used to study in the Tongren County School where they were allowed to wear their religious caps, do so less and less often after transferring to this school (also see chapter seven). 'Because now they are almost sinicised by the school' (interview 020102). In a similar fashion though sounding contradictory, minority students are required to wear their ethnic clothes in events or activities organised by school officials regardless of whether or not students themselves are willing to do so (see also chapter five). This was taken as an example by some teachers to prove that the school does not forbid minority cultural practice, but in fact encourages it.

Relationships between the mainstream group and minority students

When asked whether or not there is a difference in their attitudes to students, most teachers said that they treat students differently along the lines of academic achievement. In other words, all teachers preferred students with high achievement. 'If you study hard, no matter who you are, Tibetan or Muslim, I will be very pleased to teach you when you come to ask me questions' (interview 020102). By the same token, teachers tend to ask good students more often to answer questions in the class, and also arrange for them to sit in the front of the classroom. Meanwhile, teachers also tend to be concerned with some kinds of students more, though the kinds of students are diverse. Some said that they tend to (be concerned about and so) discipline extroverted students more openly, some said they discipline students who are either on the top or at the bottom of the achievement ladder more often, and some others said that they like students with high achievement, as well as those with any other strong points such as being good at singing and dancing or sports. In other words, the variety of treatments of these students has shown the fact that teachers are paying more attention to

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[12] The mainstream school has finally introduced a policy that permits Muslim students to leave for their festival after a clash between Muslim students and the school for this reason in 2002, when the school received a considerable number of Muslim students from the Tongren County School that was closed down. Also see chapter seven.

desirable students, who either possess an easy-going personality (extroverted); or are below the average achievement but are willing to study and hence are expected to perform better with teachers' disciplining, or above the average achievement and should keep their advancement or do even better; or the kind of students who show their ability in other aspects than academic achievement.[13] By contrast, teachers tend to punish undesirable students more severely, or simply ignore them. Nevertheless, no teacher said that she or he treats students differently because of their ethnic background. This also seems to be proved by Han students who said that teachers usually treat students along the lines of academic achievement, and to a lesser extent, in accordance with their personality. However, a few also mentioned that Muslim students are usually allocated to sit at the bottom of the classroom because of their poor school performance, so teachers can concentrate their attention on other students, who are supposed to be more willing to study. This is also one of the common phenomena I observed in different classrooms.

Indeed, the difference in treating distinctive ethnic group students is evident in the conflict between the ethnic-blind principle teachers professed and their personal 'taste' or practice. When asked what kind of students they prefer to have contact with, although not everyone held the same opinion, some responses were revealing. For most teachers, the family background of students plays a key role. The common 'taste' they share is that they prefer to have contact with the students from a family with an intellectual background or the like. Teachers believed that these students are more of a sanguine disposition, and tend to give original views about people and society. Furthermore, the view of 'intellectual quality' or 'merit' they hold is automatically associated with Han students but usually not with minority students. While few teachers may think that occasionally some Hui but not Tibetan individual students are of intellectual merit (most likely to benefit from their first language Chinese when compared to Tibetans), more teachers might claim that they have communicated very little with Hui students because they have little merit but an unfavourable disposition. In a word, while Han

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[13] When I asked for clarification of the claim of concern about students at the bottom of the achievement ladder, the respondent said that he considered this was something that every responsible teacher must do. Of course, if students 'really do not want to study', he said, he will ignore them finally (interview 020203).

students as a whole are the favourite communicators by teachers for meritocratic reasons, there are only a few minority individuals with whom some teachers will communicate for the same reason. Given the relatively poor performance of minority students, this is certainly easy to understand, 'because everyone likes excellent people' (interview 020104). As a comparison, there is only one teacher who feels that the students with whom it is easier to communicate are Tibetan and Muslim, because 'although there are more Han students, they do not come to ask me even when they have questions. Hui and Tibetan often come to ask me questions' (interview 020202). This is the only 'real' Tibetan teacher I interviewed in the mainstream school.[14] Her 'preference' is actually not her choice, but forged by students' attitudes towards her. Moreover, this teacher also revealed that some form masters tend to allocate grant-in-aid (*zhuxuejin*) to Han rather than minority students for the presumed cultivatability of the former over the latter.

Compared to their teachers, students appeared to be much franker when asked about their preferences in making friends or spending time with their fellow students. Most of them said that they tend to make friends or spend time with those from the same ethnic group as they are from, rather than with others such as Tibetans or Muslims. They explained that the lack of common language is the essential concern. When spending time with their Han peers, they feel there is a tacit understanding between them, which is believed to be the basis for good or easy communication. On the contrary, they said that Tibetans cannot express themselves clearly and therefore are difficult to understand, and insisted on this even after I reminded them that the first language of almost all the Tibetan students in this mainstream school is Chinese. Equally with Muslims, who are Chinese speakers, Han students considered that it is inconvenient and uncomfortable to communicate. According to these Han students, they are afraid when speaking to Muslims that they would wound Muslims' self-esteem if they

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[14] I actually interviewed two Tibetan teachers in the mainstream school. The two teachers are entirely different from each other in terms of sinicisation. The one I quoted here is from this region and has Tibetan as the first language while having difficulties in Chinese writing. The other is from a Han-dominated area and cannot speak Tibetan at all, of which he is proud. He also claimed that he could not accept the fact that he was regarded as one of the local Tibetans and thus avoided telling people about his ethnicity. Actually he appeared more critical of Tibetans than most Han teachers.

ignorantly say something wrong with respect to Muslim customs (so they complained that Muslim students are oversensitive). This is because, according to them, between Han and Muslims there is an unbridgeable gap in terms of ethnic cultural customs. Some students attributed their preference in making friends to the bad ethnic personalities of Tibetans and Muslims. While they quite generally labelled Tibetans as 'bad', they particularly complained about the cunningness and calculatingness of Muslims, which are presumed to be closely connected to their occupational pattern as businesspeople. To convince me, they quoted a popular saying describing a common view of Muslims among the local Han (and other ethnic groups as well): Muslim food is eatable, Muslim words are unlistenable (i.e. untrustworthy) (*Huihui di fan chicheng li, Huihui di hua tingbucheng*). They thus concluded that friendship should be based on trust, which lies in long-lasting contact with each other. Possibility or willingness to have contact with others is generated from shared cultural norms and customs.

The mainstream discursive repertoires about minority peoples and cultures

The mainstream group's appeal for minority cultures

As a whole, minority cultures appear little in the curriculum, and at the same time, minority cultural practice is discouraged in schools. Nevertheless, for both teachers and students, religion-centred minority cultures are not as negative as the school policy, a reflection of the government policy, implies. Most teachers believed that religion, the core of the cultural life of both Tibetans and Muslims, cannot be simplified as an entirely negative or useless component, especially in education. They believed that it is necessary to know about religion-centred minority cultures for mutual understanding and respect. In the meantime, it is also positive for minority students to strengthen their consciousness of their ethnic history and identity, which is supposed to be able to help them with their self-esteem on the one hand, and on the other hand, to help them build up the values or ideals of making a contribution to their hometown after graduation. Some teachers went further to make the judgement that minority cultures in general, and religion in particular, must be useful, because 'something that can survive should be useful' (interview 020103). While most teachers did not think there is a direct link between religion and school performance, they presumed that religion, as a belief (*xinyang*), plays a positive role in nurturing the character of a person, because

religion aims to lead a believer towards virtues rather than the reverse. The examples they gave are that no religion encourages its disciples to commit murder, theft or robbery, or to take ill-gotten wealth, or to drink or smoke. So they came to the conclusion that to have a belief is better than not, as one of my respondents suggested (Interview 020103):

> I think this is a bit like our ideology course, to some degree. (Ideology course) serves to refine one's ideology and morality (*sixiang daode*), so does religious culture...you cannot say that the Koran advocates patriotism, but at least it serves to enhance one's moral level. (In this sense religion) helps.

Like their teachers, most students held a positive view of learning minority cultures. For the majority, to learn about minority cultures will enable them to know how to respect minorities or how to avoid wounding their ethnic self-esteem. It is also interesting to study minority cultures because they are something that they live alongside and so is close to their own life experience. A large number of students also treated minority cultures from an entertainment perspective, saying that minority cultures are about beautiful singing and dancing, colourful dress, nice scripts, martial art, legends or mystery. In this fashion, one student (S) illustrated his interest in minority cultures to me (Y) (interview 010101, emphasis added):

> S: I like history, so I like to learn histories of other *races* (*zhongzu*). (As for) other things, I am not interested.
> Y: so (you meant you) are interested in this subject (history) rather than ethnic minorities (of the history)?
> S: Yes. ... The Han, does not seem to have its own history; the Hui, if they are minorities, they have their own ethnic history...
> Y: What did you mean that the Han does not have its history?
> S: I meant, from my point of view, the Han, seems, it is not like ethnic minorities who have something like legends, such as an ethnic (minority) group, when did it come to being, what was its source?

This inevitably recalls us to the portrayal of Pākehā positions in relation to Māori in New Zealand by Wetherell and Potter (1992) in chapter four, in which the image of the former is mundane and so invisible whereas that of the latter is visibly exotic. The metaphor of history in the mainstream civilizing projects (Harrell 1995, also see chapter four) and the 'in-museum' characteristic of minority cultures (Gladney 2004, also see chapter four) are too reflecting the same discourse.

At the same time, according to some students, knowledge of minority cultures will benefit them in examinations if some relevant questions appeared.

Dispensable minority cultures

Nevertheless, this appeal for minority cultures among the mainstream group does not seem to lead them to a substantive knowledge of minority cultures. This is due on the one hand to the lack of opportunity offered in institutions, specifically in schools, and on the other hand also reflects their real attitude towards minority cultures. Minority cultures can be, at best, a kind of decoration or an expensive taste in their life. On the other hand, to learn about minority cultures could lead to a better mutual understanding, according to many respondents. But this awareness largely stopped at the level of theory and was not put into practice. Because they believed that they are living here in this multiethnic region, to acquire comprehension of minority cultures is a matter of course in everyday life. 'Even if you are not willing to listen, to learn, you will know everything, since they (Tibetans and Muslims) are speaking (about their ethnic cultures) all the time' (interview 010107).

They also admitted that in fact minority cultures are not important for their everyday life as they stay out of institutions that provide them with the principal opportunities to contact (work or study) with minorities, i.e. because they have limited contact with minorities in their leisure time. This is why for some students and teachers, minority cultures are useful only for examinations. Moreover, although for some teachers and students religion is supposed to be able to bring spiritual peace or well-being, it did not seem to concern them seriously even if they were severely feeling tired of routine, either hard, boring, or increasingly competitive, life from time to time, and then claimed that they tend to believe in certain religion in order to cure this tiredness and become calm and self-sufficient with the help of religion. In other words, they just paid lip service to religious belief. This is because religion cannot bring any tangible benefit (e.g. material gain), particularly at present, in an increasingly secularised and materialised era. Because 'these things (in religion) are a little bit too illusory, no realistic meaning', 'no scientific grounds' (Interviews 010105, -09). This is why some of

them also claimed that minority cultures that used to be a little bit important are no longer important for today's world, as a student illustrated in the following interview (interview 010101):

> ...every student is the same... For instance, Hui used to avoid saying 'pig' as taboo. Now every student can say this equally. So I feel (every student) is the same... (Question: for whom it is not important?) Not important for myself. Those Hui believe in another religion, we Han, and me, do not believe in those superstitions.

Holding such a view of minority cultures, it is no surprise that the majority of the mainstream are far from enthusiastic to learn about minority cultures, and therefore, do not consider it to be a serious problem that there is very limited space for minority cultures in the curriculum, or even believe it is right to get rid of minority cultures from the curriculum. As a result, the mainstream's knowledge of minority cultures is usually not more than that of very basic customs, such as 'never say 'pig' or 'pork' before Muslims'. Their interest in minority cultures is also limited to, for example, occasional visits to Buddhist Temples in special events like festivals, usually for fun. Moreover, when they were trying to impress me that they respect or tolerate minority cultures by claiming that they 'do not mind (i.e. intervene into) them' (interview 010109), it is not more than a gesture of political correctness and also in fact a condescending fashion – they were trying to show their 'generosity' of giving minorities freedom of religious belief as if they were giving a bonus to minorities, which is apparently an echo of the fashion in which the state promulgates its policy with regard to religion. In short, whereas minority cultures in the school are largely politicised in the way in which they are treated in the curriculum and cultural practice as depicted earlier, in everyday life practice they are simply tokenised in the way in which the mainstream group members appreciate them. As a consequence, minority cultures remain on the periphery of their public and private life.

Discursive repertoires about Muslims

Indeed, the mainstream group members could be to some extent positive towards and enthusiastic for minority cultures and people in specific environments where they personally stay together with minorities, with whom they are acquainted, for

instance in the school or any other institutions. On the other hand, it is also a fact that essentially they do not care about minority cultures as just discussed, or are even very likely to be critical of minority cultures and people when they think or talk about them in a general sense, i.e. without their acquaintances involved. There is apparently a contradiction in the mainstream group's narratives of minority cultures. This contradiction can be further illustrated in two cases respectively concerning Muslims and Tibetans vis-à-vis the mainstream group.

While in theory affirming the positive role of religion as a whole, some of the mainstream group members showed scepticism about religion as discussed earlier. Even so, when asked which religion they tend to believe in if they had to choose, all the respondents pointed to Buddhism rather than Islam. They reasoned that Islam is not the religion of the Han, but of 'those Hui', so they know little about it and have no interest in it. Furthermore, Islamic doctrines were considered to be too stern, and disciples who break its regulations or rules will be punished severely. Some examples of 'strictness' they gave are that male Muslims are not allowed to smoke or drink, females must attend the Mosque in headscarves; they also have to fast, which is physically unbearable and mentally undesirable. As a Muslim one cannot eat pork or even say the word. On this basis, they said that Muslim students, regardless of their academic achievement, are all very pious. So they came to the conclusion that Muslims are 'inborn disciples'. While they believed that to be pious is a good thing for self-discipline, they also associated this 'Muslim characteristic' with conservativeness. By this they meant such 'facts' as that Muslims are not willing to tell others about their religion, and even would not allow people to listen to them speaking about Islam. Moreover, non-Muslim people are also not allowed to enter the Mosque or their cemetery. In a word, the Muslim community is self-enclosed. For them, this closedness of the Muslim community functions as the fundamental determinant that sustains and even reinforces their 'feudal customs' like the patriarchy.

On the other hand, Muslims were unexceptionally labelled as 'innate merchants'. This 'innate' character determines that the only thing Muslims are interested is to take money from others through doing business with them, but are not willing to invest in education, a long-term investment that cannot create profit immediately

(so they are short-sighted). When this view of Muslims is mixed together with the Chinese traditional view of trade business that believes there is no single merchant who is not unscrupulous, and that one cannot be a merchant if one is not unscrupulous, Muslims are profiteers, and so untrustworthy, in their eyes.[15] In this sense, Han actually perceived that Muslims are smart people, which could have enabled them to achieve highly in schooling. Unfortunately, I was told, Muslims are not keen to utilise their smartness for schooling, but for commercial businesses, (some of which are even illegal, such as trafficking in arms), or making trouble instead. This is why their smartness was believed to have reduced to cunningness and calculatingness. Having spoken about Muslims in this way, atheist Chinese educated along social evolutionary lines and philosophy of belittling trade business were trying to prove that Muslims are culturally foreign and morally evil, by the criterion of the Chinese cultural tradition. Since these characteristics of Muslims are innate as perceived by the Han, they (Muslims) are hence uneducable and untransformable (*bukejiaohua*), as well as being unapproachable and untrustworthy.

Discursive repertoires about Tibetans

Having so criticised Islam and Muslims, the mainstream group claimed that Buddhism is, relatively speaking, a kind of 'approachable' and thus 'trustworthy' religion. They explained that Buddhism is more popular in this (Tibetan) region; they have learnt more about it; among the Han, people usually choose it as their belief if they want one; Buddhism emerged from Tibet and therefore, is indigenous to the locality; Buddhism blesses and protects people. The environment seems to play a key role while it also shows that they lacked some general knowledge of Buddhism or religion in general (for instance the last two explanations they offered). In addition, Tibetan Buddhist culture, rather than self-enclosed Islam, is also highly entertaining for them as mentioned earlier.

However, when the mainstream group members rejected Islam in favour of Buddhism by claiming that Islamic doctrines are too strict, the very important

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[15] It is not true to say that Chinese society still belittles commerce as strongly as before, or actually it could be admirable if someone is regarded as being capable of commercial business in a global knowledge economy. Nevertheless, self-employed Muslims are still evaluated with the traditional frame.

implication is that Buddhism is far from conservatively strict or feudal in comparison with Islam. This can also be translated into the idea that Tibetans are not cultivated as strictly as Muslims, because the former do not appear to be as reserved and unapproachable as Muslims do. This is evidence that Tibetans are less 'stubbornly' self-entrenched in a cultural sense. Nonetheless, this is not the whole story. In fact, this view has laid grounds for the mainstream group to negatively comment on Tibetans despite the fact that the latter share Buddhism with the Han and are also relatively 'trustworthy' when compared to Muslims. They explained that Tibetans are usually much less restrained by their families, so they are quite uncultivated as an ethnic group. They therefore, tend to be much less self-disciplined but to be violent and have bad hygienic habits, etc. instead. Correspondingly they also lack intellectual merit due to a lack of cultivation with discipline.

In the attempt to prove this 'Tibetan character', both Han teachers and students provided some examples by comparing the differences between the Tibetan students who are being cultivated in the mainstream Han school and those in minority schools – the latter were seen as 'more' or 'typically' Tibetan. They considered that the former are easier to communicate with because they have a good command of Chinese, although a few of them are still 'unable to make people understand them very well' (interview 010108). They also said that the quality of the Tibetans in the mainstream is higher than their counterparts in minority schools. This high quality is characterised by such features as quietness, obedience, self-discipline and understanding. Contrary to this, it is impossible to reason with Tibetans in minority schools because they are just rude and unreasonable, coupled with disruptive life style as mentioned earlier. In terms of academic achievement, the mainstream group also suggested that top Tibetan students in minority schools can only reach the average level when they are studying in the mainstream school. In this sense, when they acclaimed that Tibetan students in minority schools tend to work hard, usually harder than the mainstream school students, the comment (and tone!) in fact highlighted their perception of Tibetan intellectual inferiority. Because no matter how hard they work, it usually results in a limited academic outcome. In short, morally poorly

disciplined and intellectually inferior, 'typical' Tibetans were considered unable to easily fit in with the increasingly modernised society.

Furthermore, the idea of separate minority schools brings along corresponding policies of positive discrimination as shown earlier that were not regarded by many teachers as positive or helpful as originally intended. They thought that the practice of concentrating minority students in separate schools has actually isolated Tibetan students from mainstream schools that were believed to possess high quality (Han) students. That is also to say, minority students are of low quality in the first place, and further they are educated in a low quality and separate environment of their minority school rather than study alongside Han students of high quality. All of that has deprived them from being promoted in quality and language. The low entry requirements (for language and cognition), separate education and low outcome of minority school students have formed a 'vicious circle' (interview 020203).

On the contrary, they judged that the parents who have sent their children to the mainstream schools have foresight, which is indebted to their experience in Chinese Han education and/or in the state system as a cadre. This is because they 'clearly know that they are not good', 'know that they lack quality (for study) (*zishen tiaojian buhao*)' (interview 020104). The mainstream group explained that the educational experience in the mainstream school helps Tibetan parents be aware of the importance of education in Chinese mainstream schools for having a high cultural quality (*wenhua suzhi*) and social status (*shehui diwei*), which is exemplified by the ideal consequence of becoming a cadre eventually. This kind of experience was said to encourage these Tibetans to provide their children with a Chinese education in the mainstream school. They concluded that this has shaped a 'virtuous circle'. In a word, if a Tibetan student hopes to get cultured through enhancing his or her intellectual merit and personal quality, the mainstream school will be an ideal institution for providing efficient and effective education. This cultivation of Tibetan students in the mainstream school will eventually enable the Tibetan community as a whole to transform its population quality (*renkou suzhi*).

To justify their viewpoint of cultural and educational superiority of the mainstream school, both Han teachers and students agreed that it is the mainstream school that fundamentally functions as an institution of cultivating useful people with better academic standard. Whilst teachers praised the type of Tibetan parents who have the 'foresight' to send their children to the mainstream school, most students also expressed the view that they prefer to study in the mainstream school even if they were minorities. They explained that Chinese Mandarin is the official language in China, it would be much more convenient if a minority student has a good command of it, for both daily life and a future career. What is more, a good command of Mandarin is actually a signal of high cultural quality and so will win the respect of society. They emphasised that given the need to communicate with people outside the region where no one understands Tibetan, it can avoid or reduce potential discrimination that one might confront when showing his or her 'stupidity' by speaking non-Chinese or Chinese dialects (particularly from less developed areas), or even by not being able to ask for directions properly in Mandarin. In this sense, a good command of Chinese is able to boost one's cultural confidence. Furthermore, Han teachers and students also declared that Chinese Mandarin is more profound (*shen'ao*) than other languages, and the quality of education in the mainstream is also higher, for it offers a broader cultural horizon, i.e. Han Chinese culture, which they did not believe to be offered in similar depth in minority schools.

Indeed, most Han students preferred to study in the mainstream school as they believed that minority cultures are not unimportant but not so important that they are worth being formally introduced in schools. This is why for them both mainstream and minority schools nowadays adopt the national curriculum, and even minority schools offer little education in minority cultures. This is evidence for them that minority cultures cannot help cultivate useful people while minority students are presumably able to acquire their ethnic culture in their families anyway. On the other hand, minority schools only appear desirable for the kind of minority students seeking an intimate cultural environment. For instance, some Han students said that they might attend minority schools when asked to imagine that they were minority students, the explanations they gave have all to do with the ethnic environment of the school. They said that it might be convenient to

spend time and communicate with people from the same ethnic groups, and, in their ethnic languages. It is also comfortable because they share the same norms and values that will make them feel intimate with each other. On the other hand, unlike what usually happens when staying in the mainstream school with a multiethnic student body, to stay in minority schools can also avoid potential discrimination from other culturally distinctive ethnic groups as all the students in minority schools are Tibetan speakers and practitioners of Buddhism (Tibetans, Mongolians and Tu).

Conclusion

The mainstream group members complained about the low quality or low 'cultural' level of minorities. Meanwhile they expressed appreciation of, for example, some minority head-teachers who have adopted the kind of policy to promote the Chinese language in education, which reflects their emphasis on the importance of Chinese. They told about their definite preference for the kind of minority students, who are either Tibetan but are quiet and polite, not very keen to speak the 'useless' Tibetan language, or are Muslim but consciously distance themselves from their self-enclosed Muslim community and Muslim fellow students. These minority students all have 'high quality' and achieve highly, i.e. are 'cultured'. In addition, the mainstream group members also revealed their complacency over the situation when minorities 'humbly' come to study something from them. In contrast, whilst Tibetans, under the encouragement of the state's preferential policies and as the dominant group in the region, are celebrating their culture and identity, a large number of mainstream group members nonetheless showed their scepticism and even criticism towards this policy. They said that this has made Tibetans (who are of low quality!) feel proud of themselves, and even come to be arrogant. Some examples they gave are that Tibetans will ask them to shut up if they are trying to discuss Buddhism with the latter, because Tibetans do not believe that the Han understand Buddhism (as well as they do). Tibetans consider that they are dominant in this region and everyone should be required to learn the Tibetan language. In some teachers' eyes, this was definitely 'retrogressive' (*daotui*). 'How does it come to be possible for everyone to learn Tibetan? It is more reasonable (for everyone) to learn English (if not Chinese)' (interview 020102).

It also appears to be different when they were evaluating and judging minorities by the degree to which different minority groups behave along the lines of Han Chinese culture. This is typically reflected in their discourse of 'cultivation'. Cultivation is a good thing when it works along the lines of Chinese culture. In this light, they praised the Tibetan community which as a whole has been making an effort to approach this benchmark by actively sending their children to mainstream schools. So they praised that 'Tibetans have started to value education' (Interview 020102). Therefore they declared that because some Tibetans have improved themselves in this direction significantly, they even can hardly be distinguished physically from the Han (interview 020103). This is evidence of the educability of Tibetans. Meanwhile, cultivation can also play a retrogressive role when it is adopted as a tool to reinforce ethno-religious tradition as what has occurred in the Muslim case. Unlike Tibetans, Muslims in the Han's eyes still appear to be very nationalistic, 'if you say something about Muslims, they resist very acutely' (interview 020104). This led the mainstream to the view that the way in which Muslims are cultivated with their ethno-religious tradition has in fact resulted in their resistance to Han culture within as well as without the school, and thus are uneducable with the framework of advanced Chinese culture, which is coupled by the facts that they still look distinctive in their features from the Han. Despite the fact that explicitly biologically-based discrimination has largely become a historical scene, it is by no means a died away discourse.

Relatedly, when declaring their appreciation of minority cultures, this is, to borrow Wetherell and Potter's terminology (1992:129-139), a discursive practice in which minority cultures are treated as *heritage* that is worth cherishing, and as *therapy* that is able to help them with their self-esteem, feeling of settling down, as well as the building up of the values or ideas of making a contribution to their hometown. However, this appreciation of minority cultures, as Wetherell and Potter put it, is in fact 'deep-down' nothing to do with the mainstream group (1992:137). Conversely, the mainstream group tends to describe the atmosphere in Tibetan minority schools and in the old town of Muslims as 'more ethnic and religious' when compared to that in the mainstream school and the new town of Han (interview 010109). This atmosphere was attributed by them to the

fundamental cause of social disorder and the low quality or low cultural level of minority communities. The message that is hidden behind this is that minority cultures, though appreciable, belong to *history* nevertheless (e.g. in the conversation with two students on page 222). In terms of social *progress*, it is believed that both Tibetan and Muslim communities as a whole are in need of becoming better educated and more cultivated in line with Chinese culture, in either a cultural or moral sense, or both – the uneducability of Muslims is manifest that Muslims are actually more in need of education in this fashion. This is what Stevan Harrell means by 'civilizing projects' with regard to ethnic minorities in China as depicted in chapter four (Harrell 1995).

In this light, the suggestion on the part of the Han is that minority students should be sent to the mainstream school in order to receive 'more formal' or 'more sinicised' education. It is believed by the Han respondents in doing so, the progress of Tibetans and Muslims in the direction of social evolution would be facilitated, leading to an enhancement of minority school performance. In short, in order to promote their quality and culture so as to be recognised and accepted by the mainstream society, there is only one way for ethnic minorities to go: to be acculturated into the mainstream. This is apparently associated with the familiar developmental discourse of modernisation as can be seen from the mainstream perception of 'uncultivated' Tibetans and 'conservative' Muslims earlier.[16] What is disappointing to them is that the vast majority of Muslim students who are sent to the mainstream school have low achievement but disruptive behaviour. This is because Muslims lack willingness to study in mainstream schools as chapter seven argued. On the other hand, the majority of Tibetan students are sent to minority schools instead, which are regarded as not possessing 'adequate' academic conditions for enhancing their achievement or promoting their sense of discipline or their 'quality' in general as can be seen in chapter six. However, from Muslim and Tibetan perspective, they have suffered from the lack of social and cultural capital for better performance in both schools and the larger society

[16] Two important books on Chinese modernisation from a cultural perspective that deserve particular attention are of Masini (1993) and Mitter (2004). The former illustrates the change of the Chinese language landscape under European and Japanese influence in the second half of the nineteenth century whilst the latter goes through the whole Chinese modern history to explore how Chinese New Culture has taken shape in an unprecedented upheaval period of history. More information about the latter can be found in chapter four.

as demonstrated in the previous two chapters. This lack of capital is critically a result of the exclusion of their culture from public institutions that has inevitably put their culture, and themselves, in a second-class position, which has in turn undermined their capability to acquire social and cultural capital.

Conclusion

The social system

On the part of the government and public, standardised public education is seen as essential for citizens to have equal opportunity to access formal institutions (usually operating in the dominant language), i.e. to participate in a common societal culture. This is thought to enable citizens to have equal opportunity to work in the modern economy (Kymlicka 2001:20). On the other hand, to participate in a common societal culture is also regarded as essential for fostering in citizens a strong sense of common identity and membership, and at the same time to facilitate understanding between the peoples under the same government (ibid.). Kymlicka thus concludes that 'promoting integration into a common societal culture has been seen as essential to social equality and political cohesion in modern states' (ibid.:20-21). However, government policies are much more interested in *outcomes* than *processes* in which citizens are cultivated. This has masked hidden agendas disadvantaging ethnic minorities as culturally different peoples that would be able to be uncovered by scrutinising processes of integration as shown in the previous three chapters.

Government policies with regard to education largely exclude ethnic minority cultures from schools where the mainstream culture is institutionalised. This exclusion in the first place means there is little space for ethnic minority cultures appearing in the curriculum. Relatedly, some predominant academics advocated Mandarin rather than bilingual education as discussed in chapter five. One of the results that is connected with the shifting of state policy is that ethnic minorities invest much more time to learn Chinese whereas at the time when the CCP just came to power some fifty years ago, Han cadres and professionals working in minority areas all actively studied local minority language(s) (Ma Rong 2003b:133). Further, the limited content involving minority cultures is likely to be politicised and tokenised as discussed in chapter five and the empirical chapters.

The politicisation of minority cultures is in particular associated with the religious issue that is taken as a backward and extremist force (supposedly) hindering its disciples from modernisation, and cultivating disloyal citizens for the state. The tokenisation of minority cultures is evidenced in the way that minority cultures are superficially treated as colourful and so exotic, or historical, whose members serve as entertaining subjects on the margins of public and private life of the mainstream. The absence of minority cultures from the curriculum, or the politicisation and tokenisation of them has resulted in precluding minority cultures of integrity from institutionalisation. This has sequentially prevented minority cultures from flourishing as living cultures, and in fact, has facilitated their decline.[1]

The policies towards minority cultures are driven by the pursuits of economic development or modernisation of the state and ethnic unity and state stability. They are also embedded in age-long Chinese culturalism that has been strengthened by the more recently sinicised concept of social evolution as discussed in chapter five. These discourses all tend to place the minority population in a position of anti-modernisation, anti-unity or anti-progress in the larger society, which has presumably led to their 'low quality' in schooling or the workforce as illustrated in chapters five, six, seven and eight. Therefore the aspect in need of fundamental change in the progress of the minority population is their modes of thinking, according to the government and public as illustrated in chapter five. The ideas of social equality, political cohesion and culturalism together have led Chinese public policy to appear to be similar to the idea of *laïcité* in French public policy (Favell 2001:74-79) as briefly mentioned in chapters two and five.

Like the latter, Chinese policy allows religious freedom under the pre-condition that religious practice should recognize the principles of public political order. In other words, particularistic interests in and practices of one's own culture is

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[1] When asked about bilingual education, a Tibetan informant assessed that it is not because the Tibetan language is unable to express certain concepts in sciences or technology; rather, because these kinds of expressions have not been translated into Tibetan or not timely. This is largely the reason why the Tibetan language is perceived handicapped compared to the 'expressive' Chinese. By the same token, he evaluated that Chinese may be seen as inferior to English.

structured or 'disciplined' through a state political engagement in the form of public associations in that the interests and practices would impair the liberty of others if an official sanction is not in place. As a result, the political structure imposes its priority over cultural interests when there is a conflict (ibid.). Under this principle, the Chinese government has established national associations for several officially recognised religions (Buddhism, Islam, Daoism, Catholicism and Protestantism). All religious organisations need to register with the government for a lawful status (ZFS 2000). The explanation for this is that the government regards religion at one level as a personal affair, but also as a social phenomenon and entity for the reason that religion draws the attention of society, and so gets involved with other entities and society as a whole. Religion therefore becomes a social or public affair that produces a variety of connections, actions and activities that are associated with social or public interests (ibid.:22-23). This policy has illustrated what Aihwa Ong called the 'pastoral' role the Chinese state plays in transforming backward (or disloyal) citizens into modern (and loyal) citizens, in spite of the difference of this pastoralism owing to differential historical contexts (Murphy and Fong 2005).

This public policy towards minority cultures in general and their religions in particular has left a gap between the formal level of laws and constitutions and the informal level of public discourse and attitudes (Kymlicka 2001:58). This is to say that public discourse, including the government discourse (such as the claim of '*yanhuang zisun*', lit. descendants of Yan and Huang emperors. See chapter seven), has not shown sufficient respect for diversity in spite of the fact that at the level of legal formalities it guarantees freedom of, for instance, religious belief. In other words, when the Party-state guarantees citizens freedom of religion, the societal culture that the Chinese nation-state has offered to its citizens tends to exert control over a large number of other aspects except for a standard language, such as religion, recreation and economy. Among these, religion is a key factor that is under strict control throughout the history of the PRC, particularly after the Religious Reform in the late 1950s. Therefore, the societal culture is not a thin one that only centres on a shared language (ibid.:18), but rather, a thick one as can be seen from the exclusion of Muslim and Tibetan cultures illustrated in chapters six, seven and eight. In a word, the gap between legal formalities and public

discourse essentially lies in the ambivalence and ambiguity of Chinese political philosophy, which provides citizens with cultural rights in law on the one hand, and on the other hand keeps sanctioning citizens' exercise of these rights for the state agenda of nation-building and modernisation. In this light, it is undesirable for the government to promote more societal cultures corresponding to different ethnic (or otherwise) cultures at the risk of undermining *the* societal culture based on the ethnic majority culture.[2]

Community forces and their consequences

State policy and public discourse, as discussed in chapters five, six, seven and eight, did not lead the CCP or the mainstream to full respect for minority customs or religious faiths. In the meantime, the idea of respect largely stays at the level of legal formalities, which conceals the real inequality between the Han and the minority population. This inequality is especially reflected in minorities lacking the cultural and (bridging and linking) social capitals that enable them to meritocratically compete for schooling and to equally access resources, ideas and information from formal institutions so as to achieve upward social mobility. This inequality is revealed in ethnic minorities' interpretations of, responses to and attainments in the social system as a result of their varied experiences in the cultural exclusion. Firstly, this means that some minorities desperately seek opportunities for social mobility and economic prosperity at any cost, including at the cost of their ethnic languages and cultures. This is evidenced in the case of a large number of rural Tibetans who are struggling at the bottom line of the living standard as shown in chapter six.

By contrast, their elite counterparts who have a secure socio-economic status and life are keen to actively engage in the issue of ethnic identity that is backed by promotion of their culture – the latter is decreasing rapidly though, largely as a by-product of their achievement in social mobility. In this respect, elites and masses share little consensus on whether or not ethnic minority cultures are worth

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[2] The Party's ambivalence towards the relationship between cultural and political loyalty and cultural tolerance when trying to integrate the ideas of political control, cultural diversity, citizenship cultivation, etc. into a coherent whole has also been portrayed by Potter as can be seen from his comprehensive arguments over the Party's contested attempt to maintain a balance between political loyalty and popular autonomy with particular regard to the religious issue (2003). See also chapter two.

preserving and ought to be allowed to flourish whilst both are equally seeking empowerment. For the elites, without a valued and institutionalised culture, the value of its people can always be in danger in that its people have to pay a higher price in achieving prosperity in both schools and the wider society, and meanwhile risk (further) stigmatisation of their symbolic image coupled by the rapid decline of their culture. For the masses, survival is the top priority so that their ethnic culture can be sacrificed for a presumably promising future – a future (hopefully) characterised with a material well-being. At the same time, this material attainment is likely to uproot them from their culture as that has occurred to their elite counterparts. Further, this is also likely to make elites lack legitimacy when attempting to represent or speak for their ethnic community. As a consequence, socio-economic achievement has not led to an elimination of cultural identity claims as the Party-state expected, and in the meantime cultural diversity is under threat in the process of achieving social mobility.

In this light, minority communities have been caught in a dilemma in which they are demanded to absorb the behaviour, values and goals of the mainstream. This means that they accept and adopt an alien identity. In the meantime, when they are making an effort to participate in the mainstream, they are actually also being reminded by both others and themselves of their identity, i.e. of their negatively marked difference. This dilemma is irresolvable (Young 1990:165). Facing this dilemma, minorities can also opt for the third way in which they disengage from the social system or formal institutions. This usually leads them to become perfunctory students in schools and passive citizens in society even though they are encouraged by the government to prosper or may be in fact better-off economically, as the Muslim case I discussed in chapter seven has shown. Muslims supposedly benefit from their relatively close connections with the mainstream Han in geographical distribution and language use (Chinese), yet they are in reality more likely to be socio-culturally excluded from the larger society and, relatedly, be disadvantaged in schooling. On the other hand, the economic prosperity of Muslims owes little to their educational achievement, nor does it lead them to being positive towards the social system (schools or the larger society). This is contrary to the government and academic assumptions that education plays the key role in socio-economic prosperity, and the poor minority

educational performance is largely a result of poverty in economy or 'smartness' as can be seen in chapters five and eight.

Further, the policy that disadvantages ethnic minorities has also complicated interethnic relations negatively. As argued in chapters six and seven, Tibetans benefit from a larger number of state preferential policies and have a higher profile in the public domain compared to Muslims. However, politically Tibetans are still located in the second place compared to the Han due to their large absence from positions in the top CCP leadership, and culturally they are also marginalised as depicted in chapters five, six and eight. This has led them to oppress and ostracise Muslims below them in their autonomous region in attempts to gain more economic and political capitals so as to empower themselves against the Han domination. This political strategy is realised by them mobilising their vertical social capital – which also means that they are mobilising their bonding social capital as political elites. However, this strategy cannot lead them to gain mutual recognition from the cultural-politically dominant Han group. In fact when they are exercising their strategy against the Han domination, they are also risking rousing conflict with the Han, which usually ends up with their 'defeat' whilst strengthening the Han consciousness of holding power against increasingly powerful Tibetans. In this light, many Muslims as Chinese speakers attempt to justify their socio-economic and linguistic intimacy so identify themselves with the Han that hopes for a kind of coalition with the latter against the Tibetans.[3] Nonetheless, this goal is difficult to achieve. The Muslims possess limited vertical social capital on the one hand, and on the other hand are perceived by the Han as more alien as depicted in chapters seven and eight. And in fact, the ghettoised residential pattern of the Muslims (see chapter seven) has forged (particularly) in the Muslim grassroots the rejection, resentment towards or conflict with both the Han and Tibetans. Under these circumstances, interethnic relations are always a top political concern for government officials.

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[3] For instance, some of my Muslim informants told me that they were very happy when the top CCP leadership in the region was back in hands of 'our Han' from the Tibetans. In fact many Muslims explained to me that the Muslims actually have little difference from the Han but the Tibetans are really different.

Economic development, political cohesion and cultural difference

In short, as a result of the lack of fully inclusive membership of minorities in terms of cultural rights in the larger society, minorities tend to appeal to identity and difference or even secession, or maintain a 'passive obedience to the law, and reluctant acceptance of the status quo' (Kymlicka and Norman 2000:11). This is because for those who either emulate the Han model or opt for a minority environment in education or the larger society, to claim the importance of their ethnic culture is actually to attempt to construct strategies (through drawing on 'many tacit assumptions from the existing culture') so as to shape a repertoire or 'tool kit' (Swidler 1986). These strategies are expected to help reduce inequality or injustice between their 'unsettled' social position and the 'settled' one of the dominant group.[4] Moreover, the feeling of disempowerment can lead some minority groups to oppress those more vulnerable ones. This tendency to minority disengagement from or resistance to the mainstream and ethnic disunity cannot be overcome even if minorities are encouraged to prosper or are better-off economically. In other words, one cannot equate equality with economic well-being so as to ignore cultural rights or counter-pose these rights to survival or development rights (*shengcun quan*, *fazhan quan*), i.e. economic prosperity, in achieving the latter.

Indeed, equality has long been economically orientated. Nonetheless, it has been realised that different forms of inequality spring eternal. These forms of inequality are not only generated from class or economic difference, but the difference of ethnicity, race, gender, religious belief and language. Therefore, in seeking new equality, the idea should transform from equality as sameness to equality as difference (Modood 2001:563). Equality as sameness is an embodiment of redistribution backed by rules of law while equality as difference is an appeal to recognition of cultural difference politically in the light of the importance of a culture for its people to be able to have a meaningful life (see also Kymlicka 1995 and Parekh 2000). This is to say that different groups should be treated positively but differently in accordance with their differences in ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual preference. It would otherwise block 'the opportunity to exercise

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[4] The pair of terms 'settled' and 'unsettled' is borrowed from Swidler (1986).

capacities in socially defined and recognized ways' (Young 1990:54), which leaves minorities with 'uselessness, boredom, and lack of self-respect' (ibid.:55). Hence, the idea of redistribution cannot displace or dissociate from that of recognition, and in fact redistribution always has an implicit or explicit cultural agenda (Parekh 2000:2).

Indeed, an economically orientated agenda on the part of the Party-state is very likely, though partly, to attempt to distract public attention away from a hard-to-resolve tension between the Party-state ideology and minority ethnic cultures, which are run largely counter-ideologically or counter-scientifically in the CCP's mind. However, as Kymlicka rightly points out based on his case studies in the West, 'the accommodation of ethnocultural diversity will remain a powerful source of conflict ... even when all of these other goods are in place', namely, democratisation, economic prosperity and personal tolerance (Kymlicka 2001:84). This is in the end about the way in which the state sensibly handles the package of (the majority based) nation building (national identity) and minority rights so as to move to the resolution of conflicts between the two.

Conversely, to recognise cultural difference in the public sphere does not *necessarily* conflict but can be compatible with the state's agenda of turning supposedly 'disloyal' or 'troublesome' minorities into 'good citizens' or responsible citizens. In other words, minorities will be more likely to possess qualities encouraged by the state like public reasonableness, mutual respect, tolerance, active participation and responsibility (ibid.).[5] This is to say, to become responsible citizens in the first place needs people to have a secure sense of belonging and then engagement. In order to achieve this goal, the first step is that the social system culturally frees minorities from a position of being marginalised, oppressed or devalued by guaranteeing them minority cultural rights. When discussing different types of rights, Levy suggests that 'symbolic recognition of the worth, status, or existence of various groups within the larger state

[5] Responsible citizens, Galston suggests, possess civic virtues that include qualities such as courage, law-abidingness, loyalty, independence, open-mindedness, work ethic, capacity to delay self-gratification, adaptability to economic and technological change, and capacity to discern and respect the rights of others, willingness to demand only what can be paid for, ability to evaluate the performance of those in office, willingness to engage in public discourse (Galston 1991. Cited in Kymlicka & Norman 2000:7).

community' is more important than others in the sense that this recognition will 'directly affect the well-being and self-respect of citizens of minority cultures, as well as their enthusiasm to participate in the political life of the larger state' (Levy 1997. Cited in Kymlicka and Norman 2000:25, 29).

In this light, encouragement or promotion of the civic virtues of ethnic minority citizens is largely determined by a full recognition of their different cultures in state policy and by the public alike. This policy and public climate will then encourage ethnic minorities, as either individual or group members, to cultivate a sense of belonging both to their own ethnic community and the larger society or state. As a result, this will remove barriers preventing ethnic minority members from being fully engaged in public life as well as public institutions with their own cultural heritage. In the educational arena, this policy will allow for a school culture for equality of educational opportunity, one that is responsive to ethnic minority cultures in both school life and curriculum, and 'is intended to assure that children will be rewarded, both in school and afterwards in the work place, according to their merit' (Feinberg 1996).[6] Without this responsive policy and attitude towards minority cultures, it is difficult to say that the government policy is built up on the principle of equality.

The new cultural landscape in the domestic and international climate

In short, culture matters, and cannot be displaced by or dissociated from either economic development or political cohesion. The findings will offer a new direction that policy should take for the project of nation-building and modernisation of the state and minority rights in China. They first call for the redress of state policy that has excluded or politicised minority cultures while carrying out unequal treatments of different ethnic minority communities. This policy has been proved to be counter-productive for ethnic unity or cohesion and so for state stability. Further, a call for a policy that promotes the cultural inclusion of ethnic minorities requires a re-examination of the assumption of the inevitability of ignoring cultural rights or of counter-posing these rights to

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[6] This raises the further question of what recognition would mean in practice. However, this is quite beyond the scope of this thesis that centres on the explanatory direction of the cultural exclusion rather than the prescriptive dimension, and so will be considered as a further research area.

survival or development rights, in achieving the latter. Here the important balance that needs to be made is that between political, economic and cultural well-being.

Political citizenship and economic development are undoubtedly desirable to ethnic minorities.[7] However, even if ethnic minorities enjoy both economic well-being and political rights as formally equal members of the larger society, it will not foster in them an enthusiastic commitment to and a sense of moral and emotional identification with the nation-state where there is a limited place for their culture.[8] In other words, without recognition, accommodation and cherishment of minority cultures, i.e. without minority feeling of its cultural ethos and equal opportunity of self-expression, ethnic minorities will still feel that they are outsiders that do not quite belong to the larger society even if they are entitled to all the formal rights of citizenship. This is how my Muslim subjects feel about the Chinese society, and why my Tibetan respondents struggle in between their own and the Han communities.

Nonetheless, the pursuit of an inclusive policy also necessitates a removal of the cultural superiority of the Han majority that is ingrained in the Han mindset both historically and at present, which can be seen throughout chapters four, five, six, seven and eight. This culturalism has underlain the hidden biases of rules and procedures in public institutions, which have caused inequality of treatment in significant areas of life such as employment, education and public services (Parekh 2000). This culturalism has in fact been a shifting discursive repertoire that has chronologically gone through the cultural contexts labelled as agrarianism, Confucian-based literariness and morality, science, democracy, and economic development in Chinese history. Concomitantly minority cultures have been interpreted by this culturalism into nomadicism and militarism (so

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[7] However, the concept of 'political citizenship' cannot be generalised, i.e. it is always associated with a sense of identification with the nation-state. Modood (1997a) argues that there are different conceptions of state or citizenship, and each has a different state-individual, or public-private idealisation, and therefore each has a different response to cultural diversity. Also see chapter one 'the politics of multiculturalism', Passerin d'Entreves, M. & Vogel, U. (2000), and Weintraub, J. & Kumar, K. (1997). Given the difference between the West and China in the concept of private-public, interested readers can also consult Bonnie S. McDougall & Anders Hansson (2002), which is more based on literary criticism though.

[8] The arguments made here are mainly based on Parekh (2000:236-237)

primitivism and barbarianism), feudalism and religiousness (so conservative and self-entrenched), extremism, and sluggishness of economy.[9]

Under these circumstances, a new cultural landscape that aims to ensure citizens equal opportunities to acquire the capacities and skills needed to prosper in society is in need that is inclusive of different ethnic cultures. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to create a common culture that emerges from a dialogue between equal citizens – what Parekh calls 'interculturally created and multiculturally constituted culture' (Parekh 2000). Contents of this common culture should be broadly but not universally agreed by its citizens, and remain subject to dispute. Further, the dialogue should be carried out in both private and public realms (ibid.) in which citizens of different ethnic groups can equally dialogue with each other as well as with the state. However, to constitute this common culture requires in the first place that the Chinese government allows a democratic mechanism to emerge and develop that is in opposition with, for example, its provisions on religion-based minority cultures as argued earlier. In carrying out these provisions, the Party-state has publicised and therefore politicised minority cultures (chapter five) that aims to legitimate its monopolisation of the rights of interpreting and 'disciplining' the religious and other similar issues in the light of its own political interests and ends, and so deprive its citizens of the rights of debating on these issues.[10]

Moreover, it is also the state's responsibility to protect its culturally diverse citizens from the side-effects of globalisation that has been posing a threat to many, in particular, non-Western cultures, instead of pushing domestic minority cultures to a more peripheral position as a passive and so destructive response (largely one-way accommodation) to the Western dominated globalisation.[11] In

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[9] When criticising his community of being uncultured, a Muslim respondent said that it was the Han who have invented technology, medicine and other sciences.

[10] Harrell (1996) argues there was and is some room for local minorities to negotiate ethnicities with the Party-state. Nevertheless this is still very far from freedom of expression and debate on a large scale but more associated with passive or individual reaction.

[11] A Tibetan college student judged that the more money Tibetans have, the higher their living standard is, and the more they forgot their own culture. And with or without the Chinese, that would be happening (Barry Sautman and Irene Eng (2001) Tibet: development for whom? *China Information: A Journal on Contemporary China Studies*, 15(2):74. Cited in Mackerras 2004:225).

this globalising era, receiving countries of new industries and systems of management are required to create the cultural precondition, i.e. to move towards a culture of 'international business civilization' (Parekh 2000; Hoogvelt 2001). This has been changing networks of social interaction, and creating new social norms globally, and reconfiguring domestic social structure with regard to, for example, employment, education and human rights. As a result, a new hierarchy of the world order has taken shape (Hoogvelt 2001). Playing in between domestic policies and those towards the international community, the state is being put in the test of whether it can share the destiny with its citizens by transforming both itself and its citizens to the cultural hybridity whilst reducing potential damages to its majority-based national culture in general, and its diverse minority cultures in particular, to the minimum. Therefore, the central question that has emerged from my findings and should be addressed in making up a united multinational or multiethnic country (*tongyi de duominzu guojia*) is: how does the sovereign reconstruct society with respect to such sensitive issues as the (re)definition of national identity, historical memory of culture, sense of citizenship, and the pursuit of a shared economic well-being.

Future research agenda

However, I have just started to explore this central question in this research. The question is in fact more generally grounded in the interaction between ethnic cultures and economic development. Based on my methodological approach (discursive repertoires and empirical studies), my subjects (ethnic minorities) and the geo-political and socio-economic significance of West China for the long-term development of the whole country, it is very interesting to further explore the interaction between economic equality, social cohesion, and cultural difference particularly in West China where ethnic minorities are concentrated. Therefore, further research areas will hopefully focus on diverse experiences at the local level to uncover the interplay between external factors of global capitalism (so it is necessary to invite a global perspective) and internal social structures to explain the divergence in local historical trajectories (Hoogvelt 2001). In other words, new research is seemingly more orientated to *actor* rather than *structure* that aims

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This is a good example demonstrating the vulnerability of minorities when confronting the global modernisation, and implying the responsibility that the state should take.

at the goal of 'empowerment through participation' in development practice. This is also the direction that the 'politics of development' heads in (ibid.:52-53). In this light, some elements that are particularly in need of examination by developing the links between them are, for example: the forms of knowledge required by economic development in the Chinese cultural and political context; the extent to which they have in fact been institutionalised; the view that the values of minority cultures and languages are being institutionalised. This approach extends beyond purely human capital theory to look into the historical and economic conditions, and cultural, political and social mores in which a national economy is embedded and with which the economy is entangled (Brown, Green & Lauder 2001; Tikly et al. 2003). It thus allows scrutinising not only the issues of productivity and economic growth but also such issues as employment opportunities and life chances of ethnic minorities.

Reflection on this research

As a whole, the primary research aim has been achieved in that it has explored the different forms of cultural exclusion experienced by the Muslim and Tibetan communities, and to a lesser extent, by their sub-communities from different socio-economic backgrounds particularly in the three empirical chapters. In doing so, this study has answered the five research questions set out in chapter one through an historical investigation of Chinese culturalism (chapter four), a critical policy and discourse analysis (chapter five), an examination of the narratives of Muslim and Tibetan students and parents on education, social mobility and cultural difference (chapters six and seven), and a scrutiny of the mainstream Han's perceptions of minority students and community (chapter eight). Further, the research has also suggested a more inclusive policy in regard to minority cultures that is directed at the idea of developing a common culture that is interculturally created and multiculturally constituted.

The research has made a theoretical contribution by bringing together a few theoretical models that have been critically examined in relation to the education disparity under the interactive framework of ethnic minorities and the social system. A sophisticated link has been made between these models and between the gaps in the existing studies through my key interest in power relations.

Further, the study has also made an important contribution to the debate on Chinese culturalism by explicitly and substantially connecting culturalism with the educational legacy of imperial China and the current policy and practice with regard to minority education.[12] This has made it possible to understand culturalism at a technical or institutional rather than merely philosophical level. By doing so, it is possible to apply the contemporary Western social theory of cultural capital to the Chinese tradition, particularly given the high institutionalisation of the imperial politico-cultural system as illustrated in chapter four. In addition, this connection of culturalism with education has cast new light on the debate concerning racism and/or multiculturalism in relation to education in the West as to how racism, when becoming a more culturally related discourse (see chapter one), is practised in Western society, and whether or not this 'new racism' overlaps to some degree with Chinese culturalism. It is equally important to look into how, if at all, Chinese culturalism has been influenced by the racial discourse in the West.

Nonetheless, the representativeness of the study would be strengthened if the data had also been collected from different case studies (e.g. a Muslim autonomous region) or samples of parents had been more evenly selected rather than merely by the technique of snowballing. In addition, in future research, the concept of critical theory could be employed critically so that it is not only based on an understanding and explanation of social phenomena and situations people are in, but is also oriented to the transformation of society, which in particular pursues the emancipation of the disempowered (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:28).

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[12] Townsend (1992) did associate education with culturalism. However, he has not discussed this idea in detail. Also see chapter four.

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Appendix 1

Table 1: Ethnic Groups by Illiterate Population and Distribution in Different Provinces

EG (population)	IL	DDP
NA	7.75	
Dongxiang (513,805)	62.88	Gansu, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Ningxia
Monba (8,923)	56.21	Tibet
Bonan (16,505)	55.94	Gansu
Lhoba (2,965)	50.79	Tibet
Salar (104,503)	49.11	Qinghai, Gansu
Tibetan (5,416,021)	47.55	Tibet, Qinghai, Sichuan
Lisu (634,912)	32.54	Yunnan, Sichuan
Nu (28,759)	32.02	Yunnan
Pumi (33,600)	30.06	Yunnan
Hani (1,439,673)	29.76	Yunnan
Unidentified (734,438)	29.14	Guizhou
Dulong (7,426)	26.80	Yunnan
Bouyei (2,971,460)	23.77	Guizhou
Lahu (453,705)	23.72	Yunnan
Va (396,610)	23.51	Yunnan
Blang (91,882)	23.43	Yunnan
Yi (7,762,272)	23.20	Yunnan, Sichuan
Tu (241,198)	23.20	Qinghai, Gansu
Shui (406,902)	22.06	Guizhou
De'ang (17,935)	21.25	Yunnan
Miao (8,940,116)	19.83	Guizhou, Hunan, Yunnan
CCFD (941)	19.71	
Gelao (579,357)	18.23	Guizhou
Hui (9,816,805)	17.77	Ningxia, Gansu, Henan, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Yunnan, Hebei, Shandong, Anhui, Liaoning, Beijing, Inner Mongolia
Jinuo (20,899)	17.13	Yunnan
Jingpo (132,143)	15.71	Yunnan
Dai (1,158,989)	15.71	Yunnan
Naxi (308,839)	15.21	Yunnan
Yugur (13,719)	14.62	Gansu
Achang (33,936)	13.56	Yunnan
Tajik (41,028)	13.32	Xinjiang
Li (1,247,814)	12.09	Hainan
She (709,590)	11.81	Fujian, Zhejiang
Tujia (8,028,133)	11.71	Hunan, Hubei, Guizhou, Chongqing
Bai (1,858,063)	10.99	Yunnan
Dong (2,960,293)	10.87	Guizhou, Hunan, Guangxi
Qiang (306,072)	9.42	Sichuan
Yao (2.637,421)	9.32	Guangxi, Hunan, Guangdong, Yunnan
Uygur (8,399,393)	9.22	Xinjiang
Kirghiz (160,823)	9.05	Xinjiang
Han (1,137,386,112)	8.60	
Mongolian (5,813,947)	8.40	Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Jilin, Hebei, Heilongjiang

Jing (22,517)	7.92	Guangxi
Maonan (107,166)	7.52	Guangxi, Guizhou
Zhuang (16,178,811)	6.83	Guangxi
Mulao (207,352)	5.96	Guangxi, Guizhou
Gaoshan (4,461)	5.58	
Manchu (10,682,262)	5.54	Liaoning, Hebei, Heilongjiang
Ewenki (30,505)	3.81	Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang
Russian (15,609)	3.64	Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia
Oroqen (8,196)	3.48	Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia
Daur (132,394)	3.46	Inner Mongolia, Jilin
Hezhe (4,640)	3.06	Heilongjiang
Korean (1,923,842)	2.86	Jilin
Xibe (188,824)	2.71	Liaoning, Heilongjiang, Xinjiang
Kazakh (1,250,458)	2.68	Xinjiang
Uzbek (12,370)	2.50	Xinjiang
Tatar (4,890)	1.98	Xinjiang

CCFD = Chinese Citizens of Foreign Descents;
DDP = Distribution in Different Provinces;
EG = Ethnic Groups;
IL = Illiteracy (%);
NA = National Average

Sources: DfPSSTS and DfED 2003; RPB and RSKT 2002

Appendix 2

Table 2: Illiteracy (%) and Minority Population (%) in Province-level Territories

Province	IL	MP
National Average	9.08	8.47
Tibet	47.25	93.94
Qinghai	25.44	45.97
Guizhou	19.83	37.84
Gansu	19.68	8.75
Ningxia	15.72	34.56
Yunnan	15.44	33.42
Anhui	13.43	0.67
Inner Mongolia	11.59	20.83
Shandong	10.75	0.70
Sichuan	9.87	5.00
Shaanxi	9.82	0.50
Hainan	9.72	17.38
Fujian	9.68	1.71
Hubei	9.31	4.34
Chongqing	8.90	6.47
Hebei	8.59	4.35
Zhejiang	8.55	0.86
Henan	7.91	1.25
Jiangsu	7.88	0.36
Xinjiang	7.72	59.43
Jiangxi	6.98	0.31
Tianjin	6.47	2.71
Heilongjiang	6.33	4.89
Shanghai	6.21	0.63
Hunan	5.99	11.13
Liaoning	5.79	16.06
Jilin	5.74	9.15
Shanxi	5.68	0.32
Guangdong	5.17	1.49
Beijing	4.93	4.31

IL = Illiteracy (%)
MP = Minority Population (%)

Sources: DfPSSTS and DfED 2003, RPB and RSKT 2002

Appendix 3

Table 3: 2002 Ethnic Minority Population in Huangnan TAP

Area	TP	MP(P)	TP(P)	MP(P)	MuP(P)	TuP(P)	OP(P)
Prefecture	212504	195897 (92.19)	140126 (65.94)	29013 (13.65)	17011 (8.01)	9672 (4.55)	75 (0.04)
Tongren	77165	69442 (90)	55602 (72.06)	129	4285 (5.55)	9385 (12.16)	41
Jianzha	49672	44151 (88.89)	31873	46	12075	131	26
Zeku	54761	52545 (95.95)	52161	15	303	58	8
Henan	30906	29759 (96.29)	490	28823	348	98	—

EMP = Ethnic Minority Population;
MP = Mongolian Population;
MuP = Muslim Population;
OP = Other Population;
TP = Total Population;
TbP = Tibetan Population;
TuP = Tu Population.

Source: HZT 2003b

Table 4: 2000 Illiteracy Rate, College and University Graduate Rate, and Secondary School and Vocational Secondary School Graduate Rate in Qinghai and Huangnan

Area	TP	IR2000	CUGR	SSGR
Province	5181560	18.03	3.3	10.43
Huangnan	225462	30.30	2.39	6.84
Tongren	80856	23.04	3.33	9.58
Jianzha	48971	27.72	2.44	6.14
Zeku	57334	39.97	0.73	3.08
Henan	33707	38.31	1.23	3.88
Yushu	268825	43.77	0.76	3.85
Guoluo	140397	34.81	1.33	5.76

TP = Total Population
IR = Illiteracy Rate (%)
CUGR = College and University Graduates Rate (%)
SSGR = Secondary School and Vocational Secondary School Graduates Rate (%)

Source: HZT 2002

Table 5: 2002 Ethnic Population and Government Officials in Huangnan

	Han	Muslim	Tibetan	Mongolian	Tu	Others
EP %	7.81	8.01	65.94	13.65	4.55	0.04
OPC %	38.28	4.62	44.88	6.93	4.95	0.33
OP %	32.86	2.86	45.71	10	7.14	1.43

EP = Ethnic Population
OP = Government Officials at Prefectural Level
OPC = Government Officials at both Prefectural and County Levels

Sources: the local government documents.

Appendix 4

Table 6: Illiteracy Rate and College Students Rate of Muslims in Comparison to those of Tibetans

		A: TP	B: BA70	C: BA80	D1 %	D2 %	D3 %
M[1]	PU	458	292	138			
	IR	12.01	3.77	2.17	-8.24	-1.60	-9.84
	CR	0.66	0.68	0	0.02	-0.68	-0.66
T1	PU	321	194	116			
	IR	15.26	0.52	0	-14.74	-0.52	-15.26
	CR	4.67	6.70	2.59	1.84	-4.11	-2.08
T2	PU	418	253	153			
	IR	23.44	5.93	0.65	-17.51	-5.28	-22.74
	CR	0.96	0.79	0	-0.17	-0.79	-0.96
T3	PU	518	320	187			
	IR	18.73	4.36	0.53	-14.37	-3.83	-18.20
	CR	0.39	0.63	0	0.24	-0.63	-0.39

A: TP = Total Population;
B: BA70 = Born After 1970;
C: BA80 = Born After 1980;[2]
CR = College Students Rate
D1 = Discrepancy A-B;
D2 = Discrepancy B-C;
D3 = Discrepancy A-C;
IR = Illiteracy rate;
M = Muslim community;
PU = Population;
T1, T2, T3 = Tibetan village 1, 2, 3

Source: the local government documents

Table 7: Illiteracy Rate and Years in School of Muslim Parents in Comparison to Rate and Years in School of Parents from Other Ethnic Backgrounds

	Illiteracy Rate		Average Schooling Years	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
Tibetans in MS	0	0	12.36	10.55
Han & Others in MS	2.56	5.13	10.74	9.38
Muslims in MS	13.33	43.33	7.10	3.97
Tibetans in TMS	19.51	43.90	6.41	3.59

Sources: fieldwork questionnaires

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[1] In this community there are also 89 Han residents, accounting for about one sixth of the community population.

[2] I have chosen the two age groups in comparison with the whole community or the older group for two reasons: 1) those born in 1970 should have gone to school in around 1977 when China embarked on its open-door policy, which triggered a wave of schooling after a ten years' gap; 2) from 1986 or 1987 onwards, the desire to take advantage of new economic opportunities at the cost of education emerged when those born in 1980 should have started schooling. This wave drew a great number of both teachers and students to abandon education in order to enter the larger society of marketisation.

Appendix 5

Table 8: Outcome of Examinations in the Mainstream School in 2002

Exam	Score	In Total	Han	Muslim	Tibetan	Others[1]
EJ	NE	180	70	78	17	15
	AS	318.83	342.95	288.65	337.65	330.28
	BA		34.29%	60.26%	41.18%	50%
ES	NE	96	38	25	10	23
	AS	320.78	336.49	283.20	284.95	362.74
	BA		50%	68%	90%	43.48%
EE	NE		120	51	19	------
	AS	316.40	321.19	301.86	325.16	------
	BA		50%	62.75%	47.37%	------

AS = Average Score;
BA = Below Total Average Score
EE = Outcome of the Senior Secondary Entrance Examinations of the Students in Tongren County in 2002;
EJ = Outcome of End-of-Year Examinations of the Junior Third Year Students in Huangnan Prefecture School in 2002-2003;
ES = Outcome of End-of-Year Examinations of the Senior First Year Students in Huangnan Prefecture School in 2002-2003;
NE = Number of Examinees
Source: the school database

Table 9: Ethnic Population in the Mainstream School in 2002-2003 and in Tongren County in 2002

	Total	Han (%)	Muslim (%)	Tibetan (%)	Others (%)
JT	**195**	**70 (35.90)**	**78 (40)**	**17 (8.72)**	**30 (15.38)**
Class One	49	21 (42.86%)	19 (38.78%)	4 (8.16%)	5 (10.20%)
Class Two	49	13 (26.53%)	22 (44.90%)	6 (12.24%)	8 (16.33%)
Class Three	48	18 (37.5%)	23 (47.92%)	2 (4.17%)	5 (10.42%)
Class Four	49	18 (38.78%)	14 (28.57%)	5 (10.20%)	12 (24.49%)
SF	**96**	**38 (39.58)**	**25 (26.04)**	**10 (9.60)**	**23 (23.96)**
Class One	48	21 (43.75)	10 (20.83)	2 (4.17)	15 (31.25)
Class Two	48	17 (35.42)	15 (31.25)	8 (16.67)	8 (16.67)
EP	**77165**	**7723 (10.01)**	**4285 (5.55)**	**55602 (72.06)**	**9518 (12.38)**

EP = Ethnic Population in Tongren County in 2002;
JT = Ethnic Background of the Junior Secondary Third Year Students of the Prefecture School in 2002-2003;
SF = Ethnic Background of the Senior Secondary First Year Students of the Prefecture School in 2002-2003
Sources: the school database

[1] 'Others' include students from other ethnic backgrounds as well as from mixed ethnic background such as Han-Tibetan, Tu-Tibetan, etc. This group is thus highly heterogeneous in terms of both ethnic identification and academic achievement. This category does not include students from a mixed background of different Muslim minority groups such as Hui-Salar, Hui-Bonan. . In other words, all the Muslims show a significant homogeneity in ethno-religious identification and academic achievement, and therefore make up a single group.

Appendix 6

Pinyin, used in the People's Republic of China since 1958, is a system which uses the Latin alphabet to represent the sounds of Mandarin Chinese. Pinyin is used extensively in Mandarin dictionaries and phrasebooks. In what follows I list some consonants that may cause confusion to English speakers.

c is pronounced like **ts** as in '**ts**'.
ch is pronounced like **ch** as in '**ch**alk', with the tongue curled back somewhat.
g is pronounced like **g** as in '**g**o', but is pronounced more lightly than in English.
j is pronounced like **j** as in '**j**eep', with the tongue forward.
q is pronounced like **ch** as in '**ch**eep', with the tongue forward.
sh is pronounced like **sh** as in '**sh**op', with the tongue curled back somewhat.
x is pronounced like **sh** as in '**sh**eep', with the tongue forward.
y is pronounced like **y** as in '**y**es'; except that the syllable **yi** is pronounced like **ee** as in '**bee**'.
z is pronounced like **ds** as in '**ds**'.
zh is pronounced like **j** as in '**j**am', with the tongue curled back somewhat.

For a complete list, see 'The Pronunciation of Mandarin Pinyin'.

Source: The Pronunciation of Mandarin Pinyin
(http://www.fortunecity.com/bally/durrus/153/cmanpin.html)

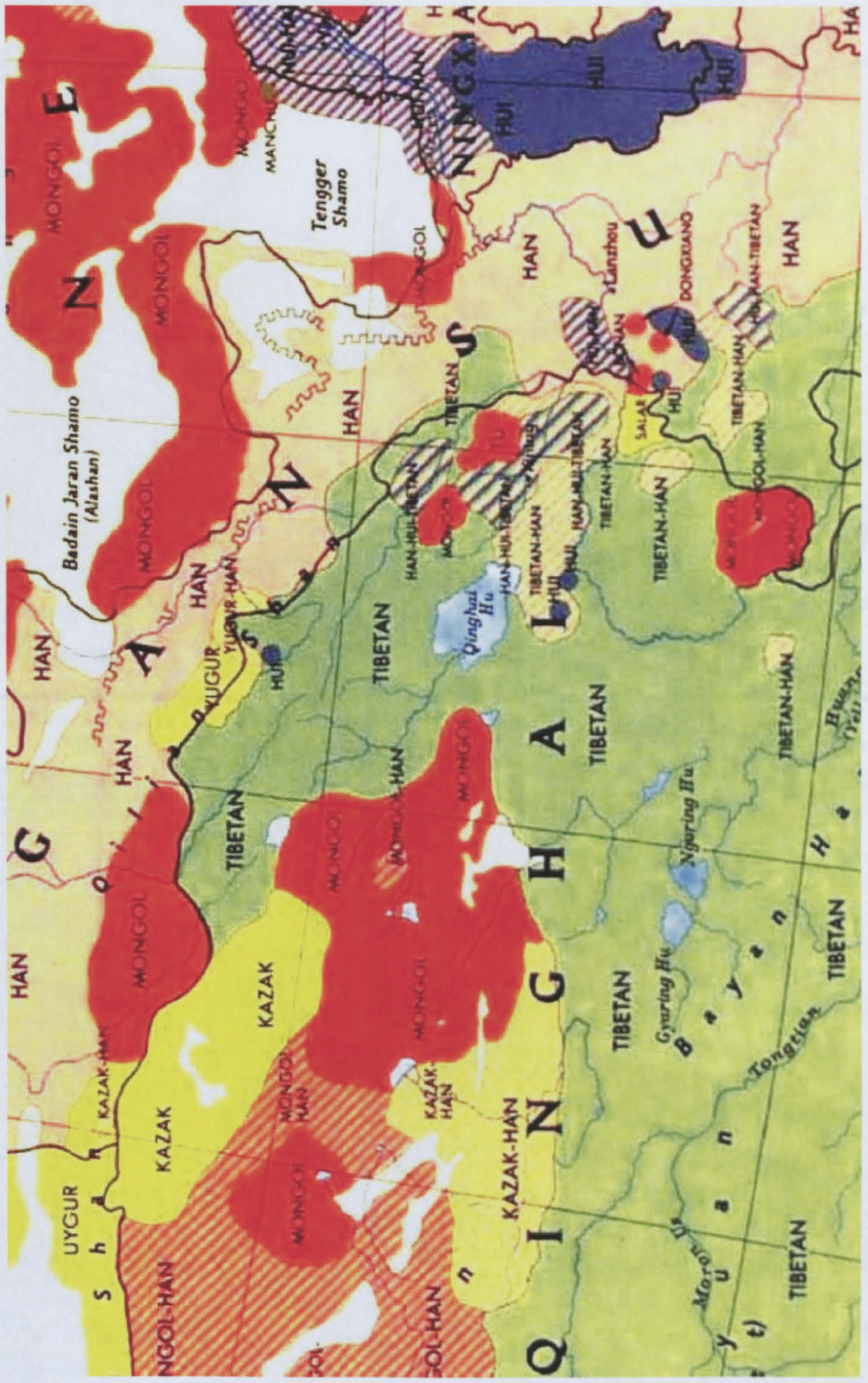
Appendix 7

Map of China

Source: http://www.muztagh.com/map-of-china/

Appendix 8

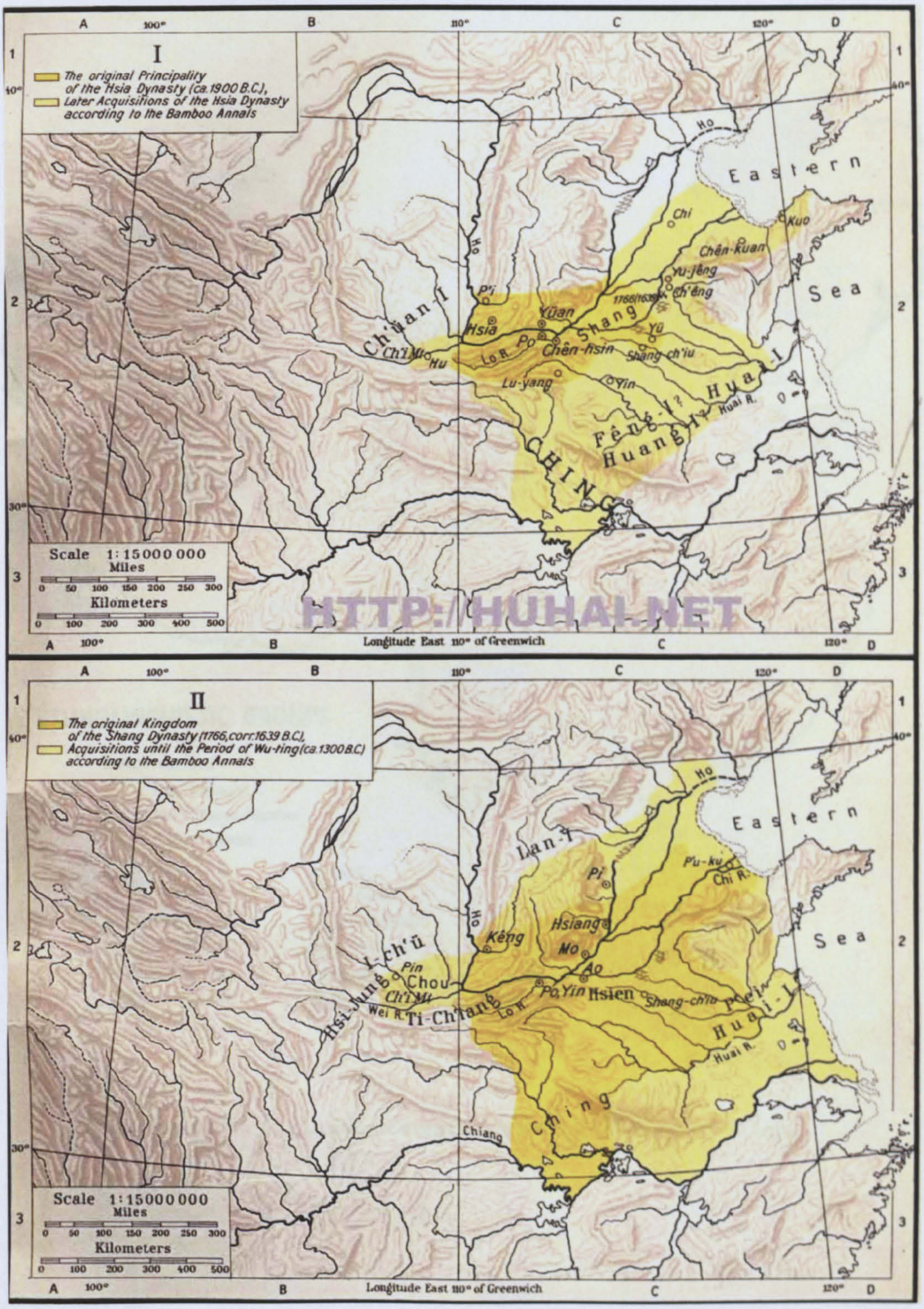
Map of the Ethnic Composition on the Gansu-Qinghai Borderlands



Source: http://www.sis.pku.edu.cn/wanglian/mzwt/chinese/map.jpg

Appendix 9

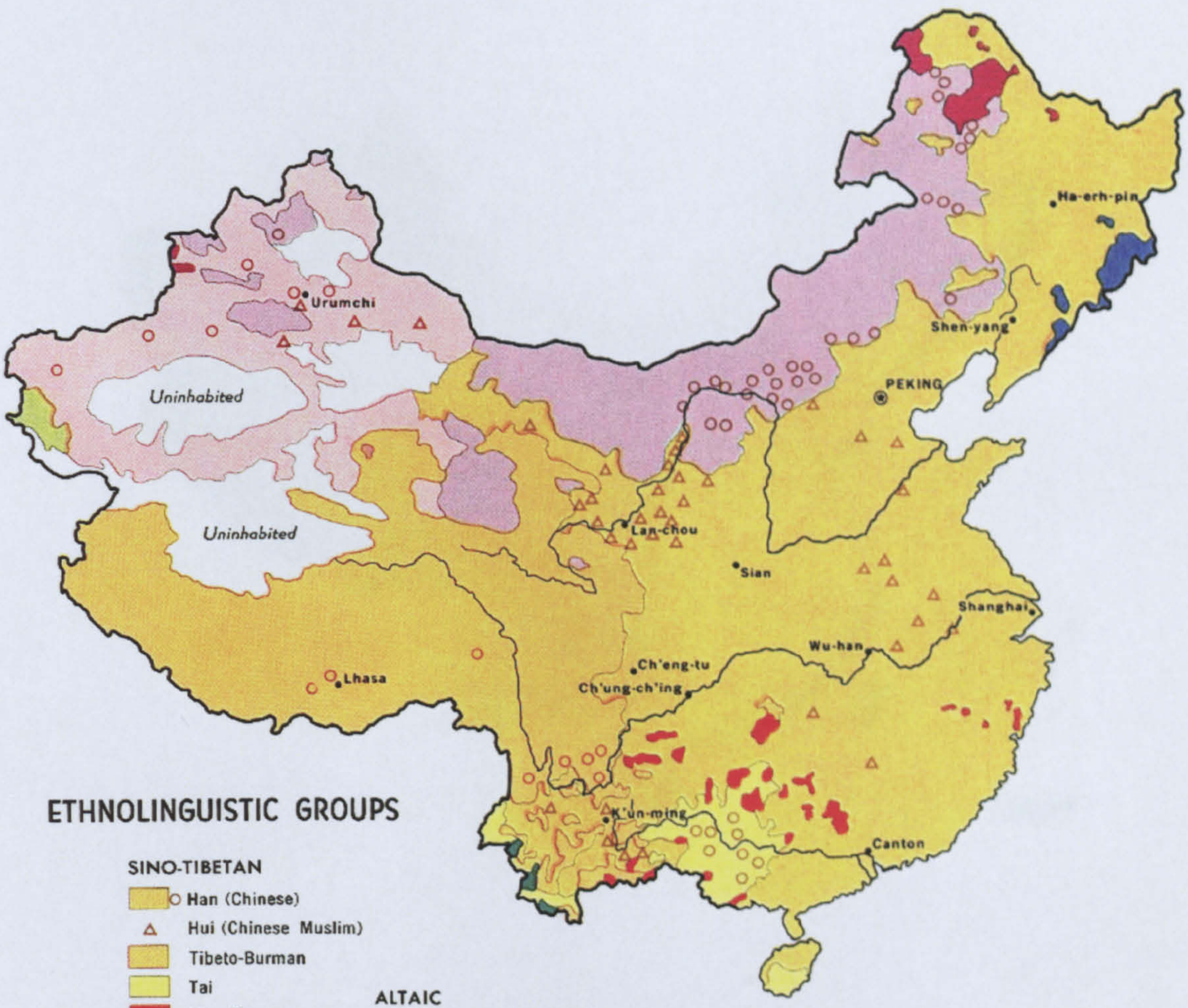
Maps of the Beginnings of Ancient China 1900-1300 B.C.



Source: http://map.huhai.net/9.jpg

Appendix 10

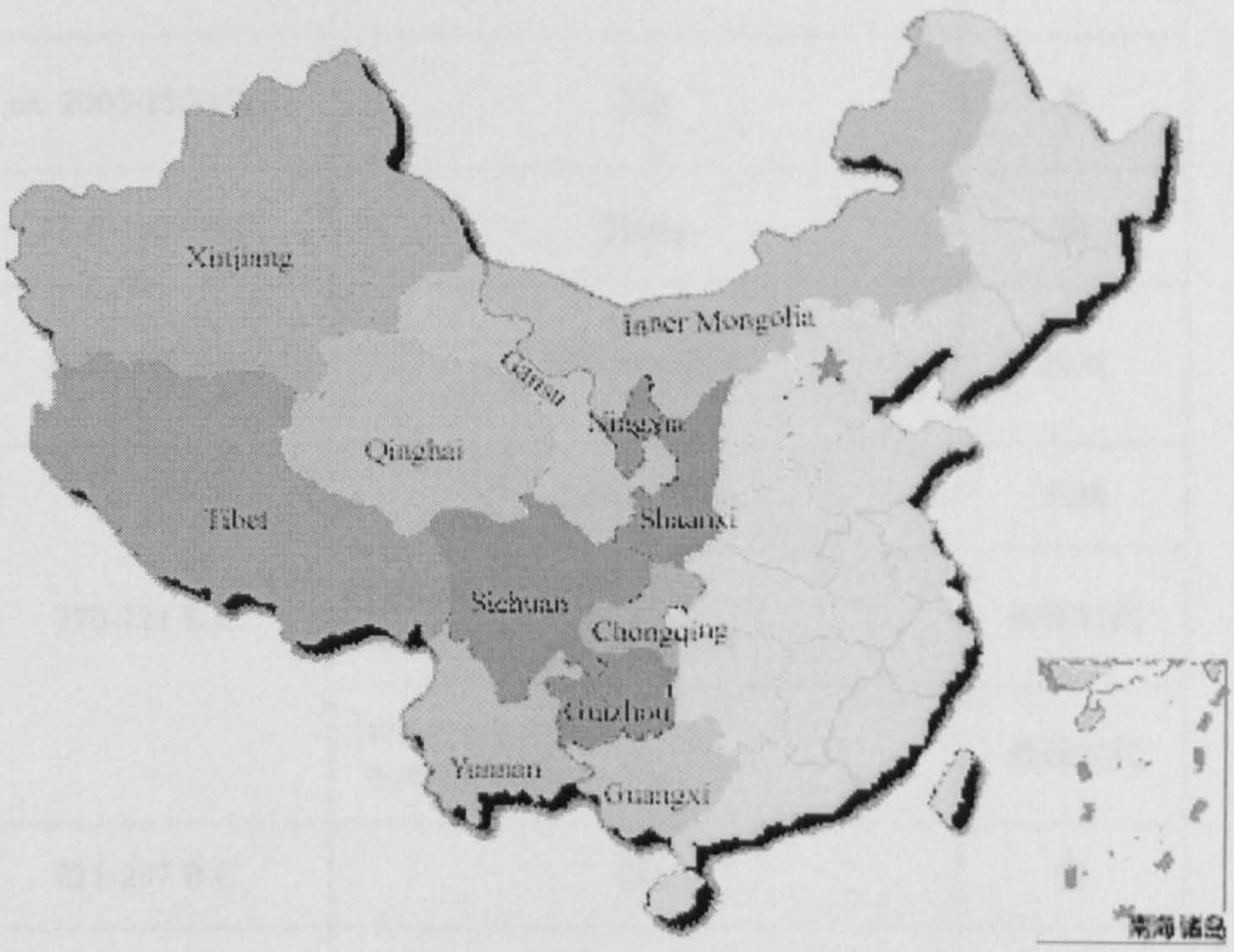
Map of Ethnoliguistic Groups in China



Source: http://www.sis.pku.edu.cn/wanglian/mzwt/map/china_ethno_1971.jpg

Appendix 11

The Map of the New West



Source: http://www.chinawest.gov.cn/english/asp/start.asp

Appendix 12

History Timeline

Dates	Dynasty	朝代
ca. 2000-1500 B.C.	Xia	夏
1700-1027 B.C.	Shang	商
1027-771 B.C.	Western Zhou	西周
770-221 B.C.	Eastern Zhou	东周
	770-476 B.C. – Spring and Autumn period	春秋时代
	475-221 B.C. – Warring States period	战国时代
221-207 B.C.	Qin	秦
206 B.C.-A.D. 9	Western Han	西汉
A.D. 9-24	Xin (Wang Mang interregnum)	新
A.D. 25-220	Eastern Han	东汉
A.D. 220-280	Three Kingdoms	三国
	220-265 -- Wei	魏
	221-263 -- Shu	蜀
	229-280 -- Wu	吴
A.D. 265-316	Western Jin	西晋
A.D. 317-420	Eastern Jin	东晋
A.D. 420-588	Southern and Northern Dynasties	南北朝

	420-588	Southern Dynasties	南朝
		420-478 -- Song	宋
		479-501 -- Qi	齐
		502-556 -- Liang	梁
		557-588 -- Chen	陈
	386-588	Northern Dynasties	北朝
		386-533 -- Northern Wei	北魏
		534-549 -- Eastern Wei	东魏
		535-557 -- Western Wei	西魏
		550-577 -- Northern Qi	北齐
		557-588 -- Northern Zhou	北周
A.D. 581-617		Sui	隋
A.D. 618-907		Tang	唐
A.D. 907-960		Five Dynasties	五代
		907-923 -- Later Liang	后梁
		923-936 -- Later Tang	后唐
		936-946 -- Later Jin	后晋
		947-950 -- Later Han	后汉
		951-960 -- Later Zhou	后周
A.D. 907-979		Ten Kingdoms	十国
A.D. 960-1279		Song	宋
		960-1127 -- Northern Song	北宋
		1127-1279 -- Southern Song	南宋

A.D. 916-1125	Liao	辽
A.D. 1038-1227	Western Xia	西夏
A.D. 1115-1234	Jin	金
A.D. 1279-1368	Yuan	元
A.D. 1368-1644	Ming	明
A.D. 1644-1911	Qing	清
A.D. 1911-1949	Republic of China (in mainland China)	中华民国
A.D. 1949-	Republic of China (in Taiwan)	
A.D. 1949-	People's Republic of China	中华人民共和国

Source: http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/time_line.html

Appendix 13 (1)

The Questionnaire for the Mainstream School[1]

My name is Lin Yi, a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Bristol, England. I need to collect some data and information on ethnicity and education in Northwest China for my thesis, and hope to have your assistance in this case. Below is a questionnaire of your personal information, could you please complete it? Your information may only be used in my research, hence I will not let any third party in any form know about it, and your real name will not appear in my research wherever you are cited. Thanks for your cooperation! (If there is no enough space, could you write your answer(s) on reverse side with the number of question(s)?)

1. Your name:
2. Your gender:
3. The date you were born:
4. The place you were born (family village, county and province):
5. The place your family is from (if different from 4):
6. The grade you are in:
7. Do you take any responsibilities for your classmates (subject representative, group head, classmonitor or a member of the Class Committee):
8. Are you a member of the Communist Youth League of China:
9. Are you transferred from another school? If so, where and when:
10. Have you ever been rewarded (*jiangli*) or punished (*chufen*) in the school:
11. The nationality group you belong to:
12. The group your father belongs to:
13. The group your mother belongs to:
14. Your first language(s)/dialect(s) or the language(s)/dialect(s) you use at home:
15. Any other language(s)/dialect(s) you can speak (quite) fluently:
16. How many years did your father attend school (from primary school onward)?
17. How many years did your mother attend school (from primary school onward)? [2]
18. Your father's occupation:
19. Is he retired or laid-off (*xiagang*)?
20. Your mother's occupation:
21. Is she retired or laid-off?
22. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
23. Have they been to school?
24. If so, how long?

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[1] This is to be conducted in order to select student samples, and will not be formally conducted again in individual interviews.

[2] Students are to be asked to obtain the information for questions 16 and 17 in consultation with their parents.

25. What are your brothers/sisters doing if they are not in schools?
26. And where?
27. Generally speaking, your academic achievement (grade) in your class is: high, upper intermediate, average, lower intermediate, low:
28. Your attendance rate: [3]
29. Are you boarding in the school? Who pays for your boarding fees?
30. If you are not boarding, how do you get to the school (walking, cycling, etc.)?
31. How much is the tuition fee per semester and who pays?
32. Are there any other fees (books and exercise books, computing or miscellaneous fees):
33. Do you sometimes assist in your family's work or business or do some work somewhere else to supplement your family's income?
34. I will interview some of you individually at your spare time, in March or April. The interview will be lasting 30 to 40 minutes, on ethnicity and education. Our conversation will be recorded by me. This interview is confidential and anonymous, i.e., I will not let any third party in any form know about our conversation, and your real name will not appear in my research wherever you are cited. If you would like to accept an interview and your parents also approve it, could you leave your contact information below? You do not need to do it otherwise.

Have your parents approved:
Your telephone no.:
Your email address:
Your family address:
Time you prefer to have an interview:
Place you prefer to have an interview (must be quiet enough and with least interruption):
1) school 2) your place 3) my place 4) any other places (please specify).

If you have any further inquiries or requests (for instance if you prefer to be interviewed with some of your fellow students together), please do not hesitate to let me know.
Below is my current contact information:
...

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[3] The data in questions 27 and 28 will also be collected through teachers.

Appendix 13 (2)

The Questionnaire for the Minority School

1. Your name:
2. Your gender:
3. The date you were born:
4. The place you were born (family village, county and province):
5. The place your family is from (if different from 4):
6. The grade you are in:
7. Do you take any responsibilities for your classmates (subject representative, group head, classmonitor or a member of the Class Committee):
8. Are you transferred from another school? If so, when:
9. And where:
10. Why:
11. Which primary school were you studying:
12. What were the subjects:
13. What was the medium of instruction:
14. Which junior secondary school were you studying:
15. What were the subjects:
16. What was the medium of instruction:
17. The nationality group you belong to:
18. The group your father belongs to:
19. The group your mother belongs to:
20. Your first language(s)/dialect(s) or the language(s)/dialect(s) you use at home:
21. Any other language(s)/dialect(s) you can speak (quite) fluently:
22. How many years did your father attend school (from primary school onward)?
23. How many years did your mother attend school (from primary school onward)?
24. What does your father do:
25. What does your mother do:
26. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
27. Have they been to school?
28. If so, how long?
29. What are your brothers/sisters doing if they are not in schools?
30. And where?
31. Generally speaking, your academic achievement (grade) in your class is: high, upper intermediate, average, lower intermediate, low:
32. Your attendance rate:
33. Are you boarding in the school? Who pays for your boarding fees?
34. How often do you do back home, how and how long does it take:
35. If you are not boarding, how do you get to the school (walking, cycling, etc.) and how long does it takes?
36. How much is the tuition fee per semester and who pays?

37. Are there any other fees (books and exercise books, computing or miscellaneous fees):
38. Do you sometimes assist in your family's work or business or do some work somewhere else to supplement your family's income?
39. Are your parents concerned about your study (keep supervising and accelerating (*ducu jiancha*) or tutoring your study, or keep in touch with your teacher(s))? Do you like the way they are concerned about your study and why?
40. Are they also concerned about your study of your own nationality's culture, religion and language and script? Do you like their concern?
41. The reasons you come to this school rather than a common school (for example the Prefecture School): (you may choose more than one answer according to your actual situation)
    - You can sit in the college entrance examinations in the Tibetan language
    - You have opportunity to learn the language, culture, etc. of your own nationality in the subject(s) of…
    - You can relatively easily keep up in the study because…
    - You can more easily set your mind to study in an environment in which the compatriots of your own nationality are surrounding
    - You need to board in the school
    - The fees you need to pay is less (than that in the common school)
    - A decision made by your parents
    - Any other reasons (please specify):
42. If possible, would you like to study in a common school (for example the Prefecture School) and why?
43. Your contact information:

There are any other things or comments you want to say or make:

If you have any questions or suggestions with regard to the questionnaire, please get in touch with me via:

Tel: xxxxxxxx

Address: xxxxxxxx

Please put the completed questionnaire back into the envelope provided and give it to me. Thanks!

Appendix 14 (1)

Interview Questions for Han, Muslim and Tibetan Students

Study Life

1. Do you usually like the study life in your school? If so, is this because the study is interesting or to stay with your fellow students is interesting, or for any other reasons? Or sometimes not? Why?
2. Are your parents concerned about your study (keep supervising and accelerating or tutoring your study, or keep in touch with your teacher(s))? If not, why? If so, do you like it, why? (*For minority*) Are they also concerned about your study of your own nationality's culture, religion and language?
3. Students from different ethnic groups may sometimes confront different problems in the study life in the school. Could you tell me some specific causes that would affect the minority/Muslim/Tibetan student's achievement in study
   - Personal: gender, personality, age and previous achievement, etc.
   - Familial: ethnic and religious background, parents' educational level, parents' occupation and family's economic condition, etc.
   - Social: the relationship between study and development in the future, attractions as well as unhealthy atmosphere in society, etc.
4. (*For minority*) Can you learn (about) the culture, religion, history or language and moral values of your own nationality and other minority nationalities in some subjects, activities or from teachers in the school? If so, did you find them useful and interesting? Is it necessary and interesting to you to learn more (about) them? If you have not learnt (about) them, do you feel necessary or interested to learn? Why?
   (*For Han*) Can you learn (about) the culture, religion, history or language and moral values of minority nationalities in some subjects, activities or from teachers in the school? If so, did you find them useful and interesting? Is it necessary and interesting to you to learn more (about) them? If you have not learnt about them, do you feel necessary or interested to learn? Why?
5. May this happen that the way in which the teachers treat the students is different according to the student's gender, achievement, personality, appearance, seat in the classroom and the socio-economic status of the family, ethnic background etc.? (For instance, are the teachers equally patient in responding to different students' requests/questions in the classroom, what kind of students they prefer to ask, whether they discipline and punish students differently, etc.)
6. Is there this situation that the school disciplines students not to practice (some of) their own cultural customs in the school (or maybe on certain occasions) (for example, dress, food, holiday/date, language/dialect, religion and so on)? Or they would be punished otherwise? If so, would it be verbal or physical punishment, or administrative one?

Association and Identity

7. (*For minority*) Generally speaking, among your fellow students, with whom do you feel easier to have social intercourse (*jiaowang*) or closely contact (*shenjiao*), those from your own ethnic/religious group or from other groups? If the latter, from the Han group or other minority groups and why? What about with teachers from different ethnic groups?
   (*For Han*) Generally speaking, among your fellow students, with whom do you feel easier to have social intercourse or closely contact, those from your own ethnic group or from other groups? If the latter, from the Muslim, Tibetan or other minority groups and why? What about with teachers from different ethnic groups?
8. (*For minority*) Can you describe any customs listed below that affect your everyday life?
   - Banning certain food and drink
   - Participating your own nationality's cultural entertainments (music performing, dancing or singing), or other cultural activities
   - Taking classes in your own nationality's culture, language, religion, etc.
   - Practising your religion
   - Speaking your ethnic language or dialect
   - Celebrating certain holidays/dates in a given way
9. Bullying and giving some fellow students nicknames (*waihao*) are quite common in school life. Do you think that some students would be more likely to be bullied or given a nickname because of their differences in gender, achievement, personality, appearance, ethnic or faith background, or socio-economic status?
   (*For Han*) What would you think about them if you got to know some of your fellow students who have a religious belief? Would you mind if you had a religious belief and the others also knew this? If not, would you possibly believe in a religion? If so, what, and why?
10. (For Tibetan) Last I would like to ask you, how and by whom the decision was made that you came to this rather than a minority school to study? If possible, are you willing to study in a minority school? Are you interested in studying in the Monastery (*siyuan*)?
    (For Muslim) Last I would like to ask you, if there was a minority school that exclusively or mainly recruited Muslim students, and in which you could study common knowledge of science and culture, as well as Islamic culture and knowledge, would you prefer to study in that school? Would you like to have the Islamic education (*jingtang jiaoyu*) in the Mosque (*qingzhensi*)?
    (For Han) If you were a Tibetan or Muslim student, is it possible for you to go to the minority school for Tibetans or Muslims to study? Why?

Is there anything else you would like to say that has not been covered?

Appendix 14 (2)

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. Are you concerned with the attendance of your students? What do you think are the main reasons that some students play truant? Are minority students more likely to play truant? If so, why?
2. Is dropout a severe problem? What do you think are the main reasons that some students drop out? Are minority students more likely to drop out? If so, why?
3. Roughly speaking, how do you perceive the academic achievement of minority students: are they more likely to have higher or lower achievement than their Han peers or have similar one? Are there differences between the Tibetan and Muslim students?
4. Minority students may sometimes confront special problems in the study life of the school that other students do not face. Could you tell me some specific causes that would affect their study (personal, familial, social, economic, cultural, linguistic, religious, etc.)? Are there differences between the Tibetan and Muslim students?
   - Personal: gender, personality, age or previous achievement, etc.
   - Familial: ethnic and religious background, parents' educational level, parents' occupation and family's economic condition, etc.
   - Social: the relationship between study and development in the future, attractions as well as unhealthy atmosphere in society, etc.
5. Can the students learn (about) the culture, religion, history, language or moral values of ethnic minorities? If so, how are they offered and how did you find the content? If not, what would be your viewpoint about it?
6. Among your students, who do you feel you can more easily communicate with, female, male, the Tibetan, Muslim, Han, or those from certain place, family of certain socio-economic status, or with other backgrounds or characteristics? Why?
7. If you knew some of your students hold pious religious belief, would you think this has an effect on their study? If so, positive or negative, and why?
8. Is there such a situation that the school disciplines students not to practice (some of) their own cultural customs in the school (or maybe on certain occasions) (for example, dress, food, holiday/date, language/dialect, religion and so on)? Or they would be punished otherwise? If so, would it be verbal or physical punishment, or administrative one?
9. May this happen that the way in which some of the teachers treat the students is different due to the students' gender, achievement, personality, appearance, seat in the classroom, the socio-economic status of the family, and ethnicity, etc.? (For instance, are the teachers equally patient in responding to different students' requests/questions in the classroom, what kind of students they prefer to ask, whether they discipline and punish students differently, etc.)
10. Last I would like to ask you that from your point of view, what are the severest problems in the education of minority areas?

Is there anything else you would like to say that has not been covered here?

Appendix 15

Glossary

Pinyin	English	Chinese
chengzhen hukou	registered permanent urban residence	城镇户口
duoyuan yiti	plurality and unity	多元一体
fan (raw/cooked)	barbarians	（生/熟）番
ganbu	cadres (including working-class)	干部
Gansu	Gansu Province	甘肃
gaokao	college entrance examinations	高考
guannian	modes of thoughts/thinking	观念
Hanren,Hanzu	the Han people; the majority Han	汉人，汉族
Hanyu	the Han language; Chinese; Mandarin	汉语
Hanzi	Chinese characters	汉字
Heshang	'River Elegy'	《河殇》
Hua	Chinese; splendid, colourful, beautiful	华
huayi zhibian	Distinguishing Yi (non-Han) from Han (Hua) people	华夷之辩
Huizu	the Hui	回族
jiunian yiwu jiaoyu	nine year compulsory education	九年义务教育
keju kaoshi	the civil service examinations of imperial China	科举考试
liangnan xingzang	prosper Tibet under the impact of two 'nans'	两南兴藏
luohou	backward	落后
minkaomin	minority students sit college entrance examinations in the minority language	民考民
minzu	ethnicity, nationalities, nations	民族
minzu jiaoyu	the education of ethnic minorities; minority education	民族教育
minzu shibie gongzuo	the Project of Ethnic (Minorities) Identification	民族识别工作
minzu xuexiao	schools for ethnic minorities; minority schools	民族学校
minzu yuanxiao	colleges/universities for ethnic minorities; minority colleges/universities	民族院校
minzu zhengce	policies for ethnic minorities; minority policies	民族政策
minzu zijue	minority self-determination	民族自决
minzu zizhi	minority regional autonomy	民族自治
neidi	China proper	内地
ningju hexin	the nucleus of the unity	凝聚核心
putonghua	the common language; Chinese	普通话

	Mandarin	
Qinghai	Qinghai Province	青海
shaoshu minzu	ethnic minorities	少数民族
shou jiaoyu shuiping	educational level, level of received education	受教育水平
Sishu Wujing	Four Books and Five Classics; Confucian Classics	四书五经
suzhi	essential character; human quality	素质
suzhi jiaoyu	quality education; education for quality people	素质教育
taotai	phase out	淘汰
tianxia	all under heaven	天下
wenhua	culture	文化
wenhua chengdu/shuiping	cultural level	文化程度/水平
wenhua suzhi	cultural quality	文化素质
Xibu Da Kaifa	Open Up the West	西部大开发
xia	the Xia dynasty; large, great	夏
xianjin	advanced	先进
xin wenhua yundong	the New Culture Movement	新文化运动
xiushen, qijia, zhiguo, pingtianxia	cultivate oneself, put the family in order, rule the country, unify the world in peace	修身，齐家，治国，平天下
yiguan huazu	splendidly dressed up group of people	衣冠华族
youhui zhengce	preferential policies	优惠政策
Zangzu	the Tibetans	藏族
Zhongguo	Middle Kingdom; China	中国
Zhongguo wenming zhenghe quanqiu	Chinese Civilization Integrates the Globe	中国文明整合全球
Zhonghua	China, Chinese	中华
Zhonghua minzu	the Chinese nation	中华民族
zhuigan	catch up	追赶
Zongjiao Gaige	the Religious Reform	宗教改革